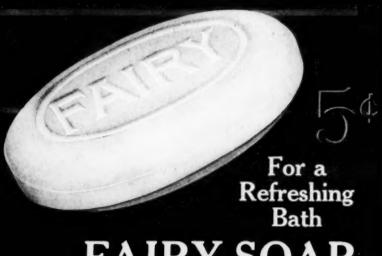
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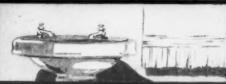
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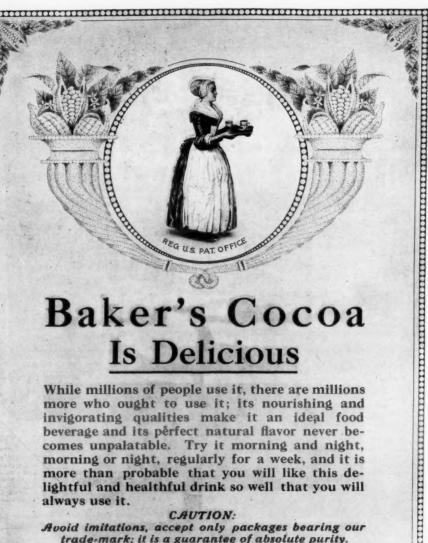
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## THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS

Vol. XXXV. No. 2

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## AINSLEE'S

VOL. XXXV.

MARCH, 1915.

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### CHAPTER I.



ROTHER and sister sat looking at each other desperately by the light of the single dip candle, the flame of which rose and fell as if it were try-

ing to reach the low, smoke-stained, raftered ceiling. They were singularly alike, these two young creatures. Both had clustering chestnut curls and bold, wide-open, hazel eyes; in each the short nose, round chin, and square-cut, passionate lips seemed sculptured from the same model. But the girl's hair was flung back in luxuriant disorder on her shoulders, while the boy's, cropped close behind, hung in crisp waves loose upon his forehead. She was wrapped in a dark cloak over her night garb; he attired in the extreme of the current fashion-from the soft cambric that swathed him to his ears to the buckle of the polished shoe; clinging of kerseymere and silk stocking revealed all his slender, youthful grace; the watches and seals at the fob of his high waistcoat and the extravagant cut of his long coat tails stamped him the dandy.

And though both young faces were now pale, both set with misery, the close observer might note a marked difference in the expression and bearing of the comely pair.

The sister's agony of mind was mingled with defiance; courage was in her lustrous glance. Her clasped hands did not tremble. The boy's outflung gesture was slack; there was hopelessness in his brooding gaze, vacillation in the droop of his mouth.

"'Tis no manner of use, Pam. I'm done for! Clean done for! There's naught for me but to go under!"

She drew in her breath sharply. Her hands contracted still closer upon each other.

"What do you mean?"

"Disgrace, the sponge house, or flight—a hiding hole somewhere, and starvation—or yet——"

"Don't say it, Harry! Don't say it!" she panted at him. "I won't hear you say it!"

"I can't live disgraced, Pam."

"You shan't be disgraced."

"Well, then?"

"Uncle must! He must, he shall! Oh, Harry, he's not a bad man!"

"No," cried the boy bitterly. a damned good man, and that's just why he'll not lift a finger to save a profligate like me! Gad! If he'd got a little vice about him anywhere, I'd have some hope--- You can spare yourself the trouble, Pam. He's finished with the prodigal! Why, did not the old alligator warn me that if I as much as crossed the threshold of his gloomy old house again, he'd stop my wretched pittance! I believe he'd disinherit you, too, could he guess you'd let me in to-night-give all his money for the founding of a house of detention for juvenile criminals, as like as not-pious, canting old-"

"Oh, hush! Hush!" cried she. "He's hard, I know, but he loves me." She was pleading against her own conviction of the truth of his words. "He does love me, and we're all the kin he's got in the world. He'd not see us both perish. Yes, both! If you go under, Harry, my own Harry, how can I——" She fought with her tears. Then, rising, she tossed her head with sudden energy: "And even if he does refuse, I'll find some other way. Yes, I will, trust me. Have I ever failed you yet, brother? How cowardly, how foolish, to despair, when we've still so many

days before us."

"Scarce a week!" he corrected. His voice and mien were sullen, and yet the acuteness of his distress had passed. Her strong nature had already reacted upon his weaker one.

"A week! -'Tis as good as twenty for

a brave heart!"

She came behind him and flung her arms about him—the white, delicate arms that were to pull him out of the pit into which his own self-indulgence had cast him.

Pamela Cherryfield returned to her place at the table, and sat down once again opposite her brother. The hot,

irresponsible blood of the old Kentish family that ran in her veins was mingled with the quieter city strain of the Wainfleets. If, in recklessness and daring, she was a true daughter of her father's house, she had yet enough of the shrewdness and balance of her maternal ancestors to keep her from the purposeless folly that was bringing her brother to misfortune-the last male scion of a self-ruined race! She was capable of plunging into danger from which she could scarce hope to escape, but it would be for no ignoble reason; hers was not the gambler's spirit, but the uncalculating courage of a high heart.

"You had promised not to join them over the cards again," she said gravely now.

His full lips were thrust out sulkily. "It's all very well for you to talk, Pam; you're a girl! If my uncle had given me a chance—if I'd been let choose a life fit for a man, for a gentleman! If he'd bought me a commission—ah, Pam, I'd have shown him what I'm worth! But to set me in a black hole of an office to nibble at musty papers like a rat—. Oh, a fellow would have to be a saint to stand it and not break out now and again! You don't know how hard it is, how impossible—."

She sighed quickly.

"I am sure it is," she said then, with enforced gentleness.

"Uncle keeps me so shamefully short, too," he ended fiercely.

"But, Harry, Harry, dear, he did help you. Twice he has paid! And now

again-four hundred pounds!"

"Dash it, Pam, haven't I told you ten times already this night 'twas a trick, a monstrous cheat! Sixty pounds was all I owed—sixty pounds, 'pon honor! I might as easy have come by six hundred with my miserable pittance. I'd not a farthing, not a farthing till next quarter day, and a debt of honor

—my honor, Pam! Pshaw! No girl can understand—"

"But if you had come to me——"
"Yes! You would have screwed out a ten-pound note, like last time!"

She winced at the scorn of his tone, and at the memory of all that ten-pound note had cost her to obtain for him.

"'Twas then that rascal, that fellow, Jerry Morgan-Mr. Gerald Morgan, if you please, son of a baronet and what not, a peg above such poor cits as you and I, sis-'twas then he pretended to come to my aid. Confusion, Pamela, I sometimes think the two were in league -my Lord Eustace Vereker, whose noble hands held my worthless I O U, and Mr. Jerry, his friend, Jerry, of the Inns of Courts, whom I believed my friend. Oh, well, well, never mind! Jerry came to me all by way of friendship, mind you, wormed my misery out of me, and offered to lend me the money, so I'd back a bill for him."

"Oh, Harry!" Brought up in a business house, she knew the portent of the dread transaction. "You didn't do it?"

"Aye, double-dyed fool that I was!"
"But—— O Heaven! Four hundred pounds!"

He dropped his head boyishly on his

"What's the good, Pam—don't I know? The fellow took me in with his promises. He swore it would be met long before it was due."

"Shameful!" she cried.

"Ah, you'd have said so, had you heard him a little while ago. Confounded impudent of me, he said it was, to come to him about the bill. I hadn't even paid him back his sixty pounds! I was a nice fellow to talk to him of honorable obligations."

Pamela's face grew a shade paler. "But you won't have to pay sixty

pounds, too?"

"I'll be dashed if I do!" he cried, jumping up with an energy, an air of determination and fire, that she wel-

comed. The next minute despair returned upon him. He fell back with the cry that maddened her:

"Well, there's a way out!"

She echoed it. "Yes, there is, and I'll find it. I'll get you the wretched bill money, Harry. Yes, and the sixty pounds, too. I'll not have one of them say you owe an honorable debt. You can fling the dirty money in their faces. The little cit, do they call you? As if you weren't as well and better born than any gentlemen of them all! Cherryfields, of Maidley Abbot-where will they beat that? A little cit, because of uncle, here, and me, I suppose. Well, we'll show them that the little cit can be more of a gentleman than those who, for all their fine names and titles, think it fair sport to plunder an unsuspecting friend. 'Tis uncle they would fain rob; he stands for so much riches all London over. Harry, I'll get the money for you-as I live, I will! I'll clear you of your debt. Your honor is in my hands—I'll save it and you."

He could not but be infected by her

valor, her warm courage.

"Sis, you're splendid!" he cried, and hugged her in schoolboy fashion. "I'll pay it back to you some day, sis."

"Pay it back in one way," she pleaded, as she held him close. "Give up the cards and all those false friends."

"That I will," he promised her, between two kisses.

And she caught up the flat candlestick to light him down the attic stairs.

#### CHAPTER II.

"Four hundred and sixty pounds! What can you want, child, with four hundred and sixty pounds?" Surprise at first had robbed the old merchant of all other emotion. But the next moment a dark color suffused his gray face. "You've seen that scamp! You've seen your brother, miss, against my orders. He's at his dissolute pranks

again! A fool despises his father's instruction, and he that despises reproof shall die, Pamela. Hath not the Scripture said it?"

She faced him bravely, and it was no small test of courage to face Simon Wainfleet in a rage. Before she could collect her thoughts sufficiently for the pouring out of one of those eloquent speeches, so anxiously prepared against this moment, his ultimatum was delivered.

"Not a word, not another word, Pamela! If I could come to your brother's help now by lifting one finger, I would not lift it. If he were but a farthing in debt, I would not pay it. He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man!"

Then she knew it was hopeless, and that her first assault was doomed to failure even before she had so much as fired a shot. But in desperation she

cried:

"His honor's at stake."

"His honor! Pooh! Honor! The young jackdaw! There's but one thing will teach him, and that's the pinch of necessity. Honor! Each time he broke his pledged word to me, that was dishonor. Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord."

"Uncle," the wail broke from her, "he'll not survive it."

He gave a laugh at that, bitter and scornful, got up from his seat, took her by the shoulders, and pushed her toward the door.

"So that's his game with you? It's like him! Tell him I'll not pay his

funeral expenses!"

Horrible as the words were, cruel, unnatural, even terrible as his attitude seemed to her, his touch on her shoulder was not unkindly, his small, cold eye as it fell upon her had a twinkle of latent humor. She had said to her brother: "I know he loves me." She felt, even in this moment of anguish and revolt, that it was true. She had

openly defied his commands. Yet there was no wrath for her in his heart. But she took small comfort in this knowledge. He loved her, but he would never yield to her—never! He had spoken.

As he went beside her, she noted that he limped and that his face became twisted as with a spasm of pain. She recognized those omens. Fate had conspired against her. His gout was upon him. Certainly it was no moment in

which to expect leniency.

He closed the door between them with a sharpness that spelled finality. She had sought him in the little room off the countinghouse where he spent the best hours of each day. Instead of returning to her own part of the old mansion, she stood with her back to the office door, staring down the long, dusty passage. A faint ray of winter sunshine pierced like a spear through the grime of the low, many-paned window that gave upon the inner court-It served but to light up the yard. dismal scene. To her left was the door leading into the countinghouse. Behind its muffed glass panels lay the great room where, penned off, each under a high, dingy window, five clerks sat over the ledgers, checking and adding, day in, day out, the toll of the Wainfleet wealth. The girl's heart rose in revolt. What riches lay behind this sordid exterior! Out of them she knew that the wool merchant would no more miss the paltry sum necessary to insure her brother's life and honor than she would the pin from her belt.

"I would not help him if I could do it by lifting my finger." That was what he had said. The hard, gray-faced man had been as a sheer front of rock, and her pleading but the impotent dash of a wave against it. Anything she could do must break before him. How, indeed, could he understand the impetuous forces of youth, the young audacities of one suddenly emancipated from the thrall of this dismal, rigid house?

That Harry should want to be gay among the gay, gallant among the gallant, enjoy existence and spend money as other young men did, showed a criminal propensity to the old man's stern gaze. To Pamela, it was a natural explosion of long-repressed energies.

Suddenly she felt as if she, too, must rebel; as if she, too, could endure no longer the unrelieved dreariness, the iron discipline, within the city house. Hitherto, she had been patient and docile, not so much because of the natural helplessness of her sex in such a situation as because of her real affection for her relative, of her gratitude, too, for the unhesitating character of his adoption of them in their need.

She knew that the welcome extended to them had been whole-hearted; that the crusty old bachelor had taken them to his home as unreservedly as if, instead of nephew and niece, they had been son and daughter to him. Not otherwise would he have treated his own children had he wedded and begotten. There was no meanness in his thought toward them; what galled their impetuous spirits was his stern attitude toward existence. He meant truly well toward them, even in his harshness.

Harry had broken loose; he had defied authority. If he was now cast off, it was because he had chosen to go his own way rather than that marked out for him. His uncle had intended to make him his heir; it was now probable that she, Pamela, could stand in her brother's shoes and inherit all if she chose to continue in patience not so very much longer. Her nature was too generous to calculate the immense profit likely to accrue to herself from what need probably be only a limited continuance of her present existence. Even for Harry's sake-and what would she care for wealth if it were not for Harry?—such a thought must be flung from her mind. She cast it from her now.

"Uncle laughed at me! He laughed at me when my heart was breaking! I am only a poor, impotent creature in his eyes, no more worth his anger than a mouse in a trap. I can't forgive him! I've done with him! I'll not bear it! I'll save Harry and free myself at all costs. I swear I will!"

She lifted her young white hand and shook it toward the countinghouse door.

At the same instant it opened, and, ushered forth by the old head clerk, a gentleman, advancing quickly, nearly collided with her. He stepped back and bowed—profoundly; then the two stood staring at each other—Pamela blushing and paling, too utterly disconcerted to remember her manners and curtsy, and the gentleman very obviously struggling between an intensity of surprise and an equal intensity of admiration.

The stranger was young. He had dark eyes of a most piercing quality and a clean-cut face that was at once strong, eager, and quiet. While the eyes seized and seemed to take possession of whatever came under their swift glance, the handsome lips were folded one upon the other, as if to prevent the passage of a single thought.

Mr. Woolcot, the head clerk, between whom and Pamela there had been, ever since her first entrance into her uncle's house, a state of more or less active belligerency, regarded her with a shocked expression.

"This gentleman has business with Mr. Wainfleet, Miss Cherryfield."

He laid an emphasis on the word business "Young lady, what are you doing in these premises, sacredly reserved?" That was what look and tone conveyed. Instantly her eyes defied him; he was more than ever to her today part of the relentless machinery to which she had just sworn enmity.

"I suppose I may have business myself with my uncle without your permission, Mr. Woolcot." She was about to pass by the unknown with an equal scorn; 'twas naught but a mere city trader, after all, in spite of that commanding glance and those close-set lips of proud secrecy! But the gentleman intervened.

"Let me introduce myself—may I, madam? Roland l'Estrange, of Downwick Manor, very much at your serv-

ice."

He placed his hand upon his breast and bowed once again even more deeply. then extended that same manly brown hand toward her, with so bold and frank a gesture that, even had she wished it, she could not have refused her own fingers to its clasp. But she did not so desire it. The name matched the face very well, and the status of country squire it presumed pleased her. She was also stimulated by the increased agitation of Mr. Woolcot, whose countenance, behind the audacious stranger, assumed suddenly an expression of horror and amazement.

"I am Pamela Cherryfield," she said, and was proud to bring out in her turn the good old Kentish name with its territorial association, now purely one of memory, alas! And when Mr. l'Estrange raised her hand to his lips, and, still holding it, swept her anew with that enveloping glance, she blushed, but by

no means with disfavor.

The next moment some impulse as instinctive and maidenly drove her hurriedly down the passage toward her own quarters, her narrow gray gown flutter-

ing with each step.

"Captain Smith, Captain Smith," ejaculated an agitated voice in the ear of the gentleman self-proclaimed as Roland l'Estrange. "Captain Smith, sir, I—I understood you were Captain Smith. I have no orders anent any one of the name of Mr. l'Estrange."

The young man, who had been gazing after the slender figure, turned an amused glance over his shoulder.

"Captain Smith for business purposes, my good friend. Pray introduce me to your worthy master."

Pamela spent the day in fruitless plots. Her ingenious thoughts ranged upon obvious impossibilities—to forge a draft in her uncle's name upon his banking account; to break into and rob his private cash box; to open the chief cashier's desk and get possession of some papers upon which money could be raised.

Not a whit did her conscience reproach her for such nefarious imaginings. The crime once committed, she was ready to stand up and admit her guilt. She would have no fear in action, nor remorse in success. Only the mischief of it was that there seemed no prospect of her being able to put any of these schemes into execution.

Two or three times during the fast drawing-in darkness of the afternoon she had stolen down to the forbidden precincts of the office and counting-house, listening at her uncle's door, hesitating upon another appeal, or half hoping that his gout might have driven him to his own bedchamber, leaving the coast clear for her nefarious project. Some sudden movement within had driven her back each time; upon the last occasion, indeed, a heavy groan had sent her flying.

Toward the hour when the countinghouse was preparing to close, she came down once again, moved by a new inspiration, perhaps the most imprudent she had yet conceived. Among the clerks whose pens scratched so unremittingly on the ink-spattered desks was one Zachary Muckleblane, who was, her feminine perspicacity unerringly informed her, the most enamored of the five lovesick young men. With him she happened to have more than the exiguous acquaintanceship that the chance crossing of one or other of them upon the doorstep or in the street-a profound bow and a sketched curtsy-

might be said to constitute.

Muckleblane was the son of her uncle's old housekeeper, and dwelt in the house. He was an ugly, ungainly, lean youth, with a fiery crop of red hair and bright, roving, hungry eyes. His undying devotion she knew to be hers, for all that she was so vastly above him-his master's niece and a fine lady, likely to be an heiress to boot, and he but a shabby, striving clerk, keeping his distance, as was fit, and presuming no otherwise in their occasional meetings than by the avid gaze of his despairing eyes. The vision of him had flashed before her with sudden vividness as she had sat in her attic, too miserable even to light her tallow candle, too agonized over her problem to endure the thought of the housekeeper's room, with its cheerful fire and Mrs. Muckleblane's rambling discourse. She had sprung to her feet and clasped her hands. If ever there was a creature for a forlorn hope it was Zachary.

For the fifth time that day, she made the traject of creaking, winding stairs, passed through the endless ramifications of the empty old city house, and down the main stone flight to the offices. Again there was a groan from her uncle's office, stifled as she went by into a scriptural prayer. But for that prayer, her heart must have driven her in upon

the sufferer.

Boldly she opened the door into the countinghouse. The swinging oil lamps cast lurid yellow circles on the dirty boards. On each desk a tin candlestick held a tallow candle for the special illumination of the partitioned-off writer. At the moment of her entrance one or two of the clerks had already extinguished theirs, and the reek of the smoking flax, wreathing out from under the extinguisher, filled the close atmosphere with stifling vapor.

"Miss Pamela!" ejaculated Mr.

Woolcot.

The girl stood a moment, panting. It seemed to her as if the whole room had become full of eyes to stare at her; brightest of all that pair from the fourth cubicle, where Master Muckleblane's pale face peered from a den of darkness. But if Miss Cherryfield's actions were wild and uncalculated, she had plenty of mother wit to back them.

"Pray, Mr. Woolcot, I am in sad anxiety about my uncle. I could not rest all day, seeing him look so ill. I came to listen but now, and he is groaning. Oh, pray, pray, dear Mr. Woolcot, hasten to him! Had you not better send

for the doctor? Hearken!"

Mr. Woolcot, muttering something to the effect that gout was gout and young ladies vastly liable to fuss, nevertheless hurried past the girl into the passage, and Pamela seized her moment.

"Zachary Muckleblane," quoth she, in a clear, ringing voice, "your mother requests you instantly to come to her." And with a further stroke of splendid mendacity, she added: "Come quick, sir, for I believe she has some urgent message for you—some remedy for my

uncle's sufferings."

She slipped from the room and away toward the house with the utmost celerity, but she had not reached the inner hall before Zachary's tread was close upon her heels. All was dark about them, for regulations in Mr. Wainfleet's household were drawn within that nice limit of economy which

edges penury.

Pamela felt on the oak settle for the flat candlestick and the tinder box which she had left ready for her hand, and set to strike a light with all speed. She had possibly the briefest space of time for her conversation with Zachary, and she wanted both to see and be seen during the course of it. When the long wick flared with a sullen yellow leap, she turned to the young man, whose quick breathing she could hear just behind her. She gave one pierc-

ing glance at his countenance. It was livid and marked with curious flecks and depressions, as if his flesh had been as wax to the fire of his agitation. She augured well for her purpose from this sight. Not only had he been swift to realize some crucial emergency underlying her summons, but he had been stirred to the very marrow that he should be needed by her.

"Zachary," she whispered.

"Miss Pamela," came the hoarse response,

They leaned toward each other across the flickering light.

"I think—you once said, Zachary, you'd do anything to serve me—"

"Anything."

"Oh, Zachary! I want money, Zachary! I must have five hundred pounds.

Hush——"

Steps were coming along the outer passage, slow steps, accompanied by the beat of a stick, and a low, groaning voice.

"Impossible, now. If uncle sees me with you, all is lost. To-night, to-night, Zachary, meet me at the foot of the attic stairs, late—between one and two. Hush! There's the light under the door. Say you're going to your mother! Don't fail me—remember I trust you!"

Swift and sure-footed, she had gone from him. She was leaping up the stairs with scarce more sound than a flying kitten. He heard the faint closing of the passage door above. At the same moment his master appeared in the doorway, halting, his arm upon the arm of the old head clerk.

"I was told you were ill, sir. Hearing Mr. Wainfleet was ill, sir, I was on my way around to mother, venturing to hope I might be of some use, Mr. Woolcot, sir—"

"Ugh, ugh!" Old Wainfleet halted, then could bring out not even a further groan. In the spasm that seized him his face became contorted; he seemed to dwindle to half his size. "Don't stand staring like a jackanapes," snarled Woolcot. "You'd have fetched your mother by this time if you'd a grain of common sense!"

#### CHAPTER III.

Pamela had been determined not to close her eyes for an instant, but she must, after all, have fallen into a fairly deep slumber, for it was with a great start that she awoke. The candle flame was leaping in its socket, casting fantastic shadows on paneled wall and raftered ceiling. At first she could hardly realize that it was her own familiar room in which she found herself; that, in the corner, yonder uncertain shape was only her little bed with the patchwork quilt; that she was not held prisoner by some unknown instrument of torture, but was sitting-cramped, it is true, and stiff in every limb, but all unharmed-in the old oak chair.

Then she remembered and grasped at her watch. It was scarcely past midnight. She drew a breath of relief; she had still a full hour before the appointed moment. She lit a fresh candle and sat down again. What had awakened her, then? Why did her pulses throb so fiercely? Why had she that sense of being called, wanted? She got up, went to the door, set it ajar, and listened.

The old house seemed full of murmurs and whispers. She gazed into the gaping depths of the stairs and felt it peopled with invisible presences. A gust of wind began to sing around a jutting gable. A low, deep rumble, hoarse and continuous, told how, far away, life was still going on in the great city—fine ladies, perhaps, being borne home in their coaches from brilliant revels, or young men of fashion hying to and fro to those gaming tables, perhaps, those boards of disaster, that had cost poor Harry so dear! The girl felt singularly isolated, forlorn, in the echo-

ing, whispering house. A sense of weakness, of helplessness, came over her. The cold, the strangeness of the

hour fell upon her spirits.

It was now that a mysterious thing happened to her. A face suddenly painted itself on the darkness before her—a face resolute and clear cut, with eyes that claimed and caught hers, and lips that were folded austerely over secrets of unimaginable sweetness. So vivid was the impression that she wellnigh called out, stretching forth her hand. The emptiness that met her recalled her swiftly to reality.

She went slowly back into her room; the whole aspect of the plan she had so complacently evolved had changed. How hideous it was! How could she for a second's space have contemplated it? How would those eyes that haunted her have regarded her could they have read into her soul and seen so base a stain lurking there? What? Bring ruin on a poor, honest youth? Make of his faithful, patient love for her a weapon with which to destroy him? Oh, not even for Harry, not even to save her only brother, could she do this wrong! She must think of something else. Ideas crowded upon her, impossible suggestions. It almost seemed as if spirits of evil were mocking her.

Then again she started. It was not moan of wind this time, nor rattle on cobblestone without, not groan or creak of old wood or cavernous sigh of echoing passages. From the deep stillness of the house there arose to her ears the sound of steps and the snap of a closing door. Instantly a new fear was upon her. She remembered her uncle's face of pain, the groans that had been wrung out of him in the silence of the office room and by the agony of each tread. What if he were suddenly worse? What if the gout had flown to some vital spot? She had been plotting to rob him, she had sworn defiance to him, but now she knew that she could

not bear him to die; that, after all, she loved him. She determined to go down to his room and satisfy herself as to whether these stirrings foreboded a sudden mortal seizure, or merely an increase of the usual symptoms. Any action was a relief after her distracting cogitations. She picked up her candlestick and went softly.

At the entrance to the passage on which her uncle's bedchamber was situated, she slipped off her sandal shoes and proceeded with no more noise than a moth till she reached his door, where

she paused to listen.

A colloquy was proceeding within, low-toned as behooves midnight colloquies, but carried on in eminently quiet, everyday accents. Whatever had brought old Woolcot at this hour to his master's side, it was neither deadly illness nor, it seemed to the girl, business of extraordinary importance.

She was preparing, mentally shrugging her shoulders at herself for her feminine nervousness, to retrace her steps, when the sound of two words arrested her. The words were "Captain Smith." A sudden impulse seized She snuffed out her candle between two bold fingers and drew closer to the panel to listen. Yes, this was her uncle speaking, and what he was saying referred right enough to Captain Smith, or rather Mr. Roland l'Estrange, the stranger with the bold, seafaring eyes and the close mouth, whose strong personality so singularly haunted her; about whose dual nomenclature there was already an arresting atmosphere of mystery.

"I have full confidence in Captain Smith," Merchant Wainfleet was say-

ing.

His voice was raised a little, as that of one who resents a doubt upon his judgment, and he had evidently made some quick movement, for he ended up with an exclamation that betrayed pain.

"It is not that I should venture to

criticize your arrangements, Mr. Wainfleet, sir," came the clerk's voice humbly; he was always very humble with his master. "Mean old fellow!" Pamela stigmatized him in her mind. "But so large a sum being at stake this time, and not having known the gentleman as bearing another name, and it having struck me, sir, I must confess, as rather imprudent of him to introduce himself in that manner to the young lady, in the circumstances, sir—"

To the girl's surprise, her uncle gave

an unmistakable chuckle.

"Oh, aye, the young lady! My niece, you mean. That was a curious meeting of theirs, Woolcot. One of those things one might call preordained. Tush, you're a good and trusty servant. You do well to conceal nothing. But my agent, Captain Smith, hark you, Woolcot—"

Here the two must have drawn close to each other for the passage of some secret too important to be confided even to the silent night and a sleeping house, for no sound penetrated to the listener

but a confused murmur.

Pamela's curiosity mounted overpoweringly. What could these pillars of respectability and eminent virtue be conspiring together in this manner? How came Captain Smith or Mr. Roland l'Estrange into their councils? was her uncle pleased that he and she should have met? Oh, she must know -she must contrive to probe this mystery to the bottom! It seemed to her that her own fate and her brother's were wrapped up in these strange, hidden doings; for, indeed, the secret once in her possession, might she not have a weapon of power to wield for Harry's sake?

There was a cabinet off her uncle's bedchamber, where Mrs. Muckleblane stored her master's wardrobe in some old trunks. Pamela remembered that the door which opened into the bedroom was of the lightest description,

that it had glass panels before which hung moreen curtains. She had helped the housekeeper lay by some winter garments in camphor there last summer. She had peered into her uncle's somber bedchamber through these little windows, and the dusty smell of the curtains was still vivid to her nostrils. How well might she not both see and hear from such a coign of vantage! paused not a second for timorous suggestion, but felt her way along the passage wall until the handle of the cabinet door was in her grasp, and then, with infinite precaution, turned it. A faint ray of light, penetrating through the curtained panel, guided her. stepped across an old valise, skirted the dangerous angle of a huge hair trunk, and found herself against the door of communication. The voices within the room were now quite distinct. Her heart beat high as she applied her eye with great precaution to the slit of the curtain.

Mr. Wainfleet was sitting in a great armchair, wrapped in a dressing gown. He was propped up by pillows, and the gouty foot, bandaged and supported on a pillow, reposed upon a chair in front of him. The old man's face was vividly illuminated by a couple of wax candles in heavy silver candiesticks, placed close together on a table beside him. It looked terribly gray and drawn, but the alert gleam of the eye and the firm lines of the mouth showed spirit triumphant over suffering. 'Kneeling at her uncle's feet was the old clerk. His back was to her, but by the movement of his shoulders she saw that he was busily occupied.

Her own name was the first word to catch her ear distinctly.

"-escort Pamela," her uncle was

saying.

The clerk's gray head was jerked upward. The movement was one of surprise.

"Miss Pamela, did you say, sir?"

"Yes, Woolcot, it is Captain Smith's suggestion. I confess I think it a reasonable one. I would have conducted my niece myself had I been able to do so. As he truly pointed out to me, there would be less suspicion attaching to the journey this time of year if it should coincide with a Christmastide visit. In the circumstances, however, nothing could be more natural, as Captain Smith remarked, than that the young lady should not be deprived of her pleasure. 'Twill set your busybody lads in the countinghouse gossiping if you go alone, Woolcot, but if you go as escort, and do a bit of business for the house at the same time, there can be no cause for surprise or excuse for prying. Aye, aye. A prudent man concealeth knowledge."

Woolcot's shoulders were moving again, his wigged poll was bent.

"Then it is your wish I should escort Miss Cherryfield in your stead, sir?"

"Yes, Woolcot. The hand of the Lord hath touched me, as holy Job saith. Poor human worm that I am, who am I to resist divine dispensation? I submit, O Lord! My comings and goings are in Thy keeping. Not for that will I withdraw my hand from the plow. The work that I have undertaken shall not be left undone." He drew a long breath; his voice lost itself in a faint hiss of pain.

Falling from astonishment into astonishment and feeling the mystery thicken ever deeper about her, Pamela saw the clerk rise to his feet, holding in both hands a long canvas belt, which seemed to be heavily weighted and bulging all along its length. With this he moved toward the back of the room out of her sight, revealing on the spot near where he had knelt three canvas bags, one of which, half opened, displayed its contents. They were gleaming yellow in the candlelight.

"It's gold!" thought the girl. "It's

gold! And that belt was stuffed with gold! What can it mean?"

Her uncle's eyes were closed. She saw his lips moving, and guessed him to be stimulating himself against his suffering with a text of Scripture. For all his piety, she had a sudden conviction that he and his old clerk were scheming some dark and uncertain enterprise. Woolcot's next remark, from his unseen corner of the room, confirmed her suspicion.

"That's twelve hundred between the two belts, sir,"

Mr. Wainfleet opened his eyes. They looked unnaturally alert in his livid countenance.

"It is my intention to make the venture rather bigger than usual," he announced, in a determined voice, very different from the languorous drone of his biblical commentary.

"Indeed, sir?" Woolcot came into the range of vision. Pamela saw his rugged profile against the light. Disapproval was on that outthrust nether lip. "Recent government orders are very severe, sir. They'll be increasingly on the alert just now. Since you are unable to conduct operations yourself, why not at least limit the risk—"

He broke off; the old merchant's face was convulsed between pain and anger.

"I'm doubling the usual stake. Captain Smith takes over thirty thousand this time. I take six thousand of itsix thousand, not a guinea less. This may be the last chance—and the best. The new French king must have gold —and is ready to pay the price. premium has never been so highthirty-two francs, Woolcot, in French royal bank notes, for every guinea! That is the price Captain Smith quotes for this venture—a gross profit of thirty-three per cent, mark you! That's two thousand pounds for my stake. Take away five hundred for Captain Smith's quarter share—fifteen hundred net profit! Just for two days' risk and

anxiety! The best terms we've had yet. Pshaw! If a wise man contendeth with a fool, whether he rage or laugh, there is no rest."

In spite of this rebuke, there was obstinacy in every line of the old clerk's

figure.

"I will make so bold, Mr. Wainfleet, sir— Nay, I should not be your faithful servant if I did not lift up my voice. I have the gravest misgivings— The deed is rash in the extreme. It is not that I fear the risk for myself. The house has had me, body and soul, from boyhood, sir. I'd give my life to serve it! But this sudden illness of yours, Mr. Wainfleet, does it not seem like a warning from Heaven? Why not defer—"

"Not an hour!" Pamela knew the jut of her uncle's jaw and wondered how Woolcot had dared. "The goldmust be at Tougham Cave on Saturday at the turn of the tide. These are my orders. See that you obey them!"

It was not that the master's voice was louder, but there was something in its tone, something in the flash of his indomitable eye that conveyed a weight of reprobation under which the servant literally cringed. After a moment Woolcot said humbly:

"Day after to-morrow, then, sir."

A flickering smile crossed the mer-

chant's compressed lips.

"The weather's improving. There will be a new moon. Everything is in our favor. Order a hired coach-nothing ostentatious. Four out of the half dozen sea cases in the cellars will serve our purpose best. You will pack them yourself. Three belts in two of them, two in the remainder, each belt toward the bottom of the case, surround with loose cotton. Fill in with samples for the India market. You can give it out you are to meet a French gentleman-a gentleman from Lille-on business at Folkestone. The extra weight in the cases will not attract

suspicion; the lead lining and the iron clamps will account for it. As for my niece— What's that?"

The door had creaked, as, imprudently, Pamela pressed closer to it, eager not to miss any reference to herself, for the old man had dropped his voice. Paralyzed she now stood, her heart beating so thickly that she feared its pulsations must inevitably betray her. But Woolcot said soothingly, after a second:

"'Tis a stormy night, sir, and the old doors rattle. I had best continue to

fill the belts."

He reached for one of the canvas bags as he spoke, and in so doing overset the chair upon which the packages were laid. Under cover of the noise and the invalid's impatient outcry: "Tut, tut, you'll wake the house!" Pamela slipped out of her hiding place into the passage. Her uncle's glance around the room warned her that he was on the alert.

She felt her way to the passage as cautiously as she had come, and safely reached the attic stairs, where, feeling suddenly as if her knees were giving way beneath her, she sat down in the

dark and fell to thinking.

The exact nature of a transaction that had to be conducted in so secret, not to say furtive, a manner, remained a mystery to her. She knew nothing of the guinea smuggling—that audacious trade between English gold and French necessity—which was carried on under the very nose of his majesty's edicts and the fiercest official watchfulness. But it was plain that her uncle was engaged upon some traffic against the laws of the land, and that an adventure in connection with this traffic was about to be launched which old Woolcot characterized as risky in the extreme.

The girl's lip curled. This was the stern, self-righteous man who had no mercy for her brother's harmless, youthful follies, who would not lift a finger to save his life or honor! A moment she was prepared to think her aged relative guilty of the direst wickedness, but presently she remembered that the leader of the adventure was none other than the man with the double name and the piercing glance. All thought of treachery or evil vanished from her mind, to be replaced by vague, romantic suggestions of daring deeds by moonless waters, of secret treasure, the cave tryst, and of herself, mysteriously and thrillingly intermingled with the drama!

When her cogitations reached this point, she deliberately lit her candle again, and established herself a flight higher on the attic stairs, to await Zachary's appearance at the rendezvous. Even as she did so, a single solemn stroke from the church fell upon her ear. She heard it repeated, and then the city fell into a wind-swept silence, ever less frequently broken by rumble of passing cart or belated footfall.

One o'clock! "Come late, between one and two"—this had been her careless order. "He will be here at half past one," she said to herself decidedly, with a swift intuition of the mean that his Scotch precision and his burning ardor to serve her would dictate to him. She had still half an hour in which to

plan her course of action.

The conclusion she had come to before her recent successful reconnoiter was now confirmed. Zachary's services must be dispensed with. Not only had she an increasing horror for the idea of basely embroiling the poor clerk in her mad enterprise, but she now realized that to do so would be to betray her uncle's most private matters. Besides this, no doubt even to the most noble nature there is an additional impetus toward good when evil becomes superfluous.

She had heard enough of her uncle's secrets; she could act for herself. By some odd, singular, delightful freak of luck she had been actually brought into

the game. Audacity should not be wanting for the playing of her part. It meant but the securing of one of the belts out of those trunks—ostensibly of samples, in reality cases of hidden treasure. Each belt contained six hundred pounds, and she needed only five hundred to save Harry!

Her spirit rose giddily, wheeling, and it seemed to her, as she sat in the cold, the great night all about her, that her soul was singing, like some lark, in dazzling circles of light. To save Harry! It was her dearest wish, bumixed up with it there were fleeting visions of the dark, clean-cut face, of Mr. Roland l'Estrange's eyes as they had enveloped and held her. She remembered rosily the touch of his lips on her hand, the ring of his deep, musical voice. She knew that she was to see him again. She knew that he was the pivot of the whole undertaking, dark, rash, mysterious, desperate, and alluring. He had asked that she should be sent to some unknown destinationupon this Christmas visit which innocently covered so much intrigue. seemed to her that their fates were from henceforth commingled. There was no fear in the thought, rather a strange exhilaration.

#### CHAPTER IV.

Zachary came creeping up the stairs, stumbling. He, too, was unshod. He carried a dark lantern in his hand and lifted it when he came in sight of the waiting girl, so that the escaping shaft of light struck his face. Pamela thought she had never seen any one so ugly, and the last nail in her determination to dispense with him was riveted with contentment. Yet she had called him to her aid; another might have found that the situation presented difficulties. Pamela was young and ruthless. was not one to beat about the bush. She did not even give him time to address her.

"Zachary," she said, "I'm sorry I asked you to come here. I have done very wrong. Whatever difficulties I may be in, I must not involve you in them. I will not be your ruin, Zachary."

So noble did these words sound that she could not but feel nobly as she spoke them. Her full, lustrous eyes were upraised toward him, charged with solemnity. She sat clasping her knees, her pretty stockinged feet pressed close together on the step beneath her.

He could scarcely speak at all, so urgent were the feelings that oppressed

him.

"Oh, Miss Pamela—" He wrung his hands together, the lantern between them; and the vivid ray danced wildly up the paneled wall and was lost in the heights of the staircase above them. "Oh, Miss Pamela, dinna say that! Dinna tak' back your word, Miss Pamela! Dinna blight the only joy you've ever given me! Ruin for you, Miss Pamela, wadna that be— Oh, Miss Pamela, wadna that be just the grandest—"

He was coming closer to her, still wringing his bony hands, still shaking the lantern; still to her eyes the ugliest being they had ever beheld. But something of desperation in his air smote her with a vague alarm. She sprang to her

feet.

"'Tis useless, Zachary. I have reflected. Besides, you cannot help me. I have made other plans. I—I don't want you," she blurted out finally, with a cruel frankness. "I'm sorry. Good night."

She had sprung to her feet and was flying upward, terrified to hear his muffled tread after her. The mad fandango of the lantern beam seemed to encircle her, his panting words were in her ear;

"I'll not gie it up! I'm no the man to go back on my promise, Miss Pamela! And if I get you the five hundred pounds, what then, Miss Pamela? Miss Pamela, willna ye bide a minute? No but a word, Miss Pamela——"

She turned and faced him on the

landing.

"For shame, Zachary! How dare you! Your master's niece—and I who trusted you! How dare you follow me? Go back this moment! I see! I see!" she cried, cunningly aiming her arrow. "I ought not to have trusted you."

"Do you say that to me?" said he.

He put his lantern at his feet and stood with folded arms, his chin on his breast, looking at her darkly from under his eyebrows. A breathless, lovely creature she was, blown as by contrary winds, half fiercely rejecting and thrusting him from her, half wavering toward him, conscious of her own unkindness.

"You oughtn't to be so tiresome," she said pettishly. "A person may change her mind. I—I have changed my mind."

"I haven't changed mine," said he abruptly, "and so ye'll find in due time, Miss Pamela."

He picked up his light and went down the stairs away from her.

She remained, staring after him doubtfully. Of a sudden he had seemed quite changed—no longer shambling, eager Zachary, mad in love, but a man, a man with a purpose, strong and self-controlled.

"Now what can he mean?" she asked herself, half aloud. But she shook off the uncomfortable What did it matter? She had freed herself of him; she had no further responsibility in the matter. She could spare no time to ponder over Master Zachary's silly purposes. She had still work to do to-night.

When the last heavy, wadded footstep and responsive creak of ancient wood had given place to stillness, she went to the attic chamber next her own. It had once been Harry's. Even to-night, full of her own scheme, her heart was gripped at sight of the empty room. How she hated the desolation of this abandoned sanctum, that sheeted bed, those huddled, meaningless bits of furniture! The life had gone out of everything; it was a place of the dead.

Quickly she marched across the echoing boards to the object of her search, Harry's old trunk. Pray Heaven he had not locked it! No, careless boy! How blessed for her plans at this moment was this carelessness! How blessed for her, too, the extravagance that had made him discard so much excellent apparel, because of its plain country fashion. She opened the great nailed lid. It swung creaking on its

rusty hinges.

Ah! Here they were-the buckskin riding breeches, the high boots, the gray cloth riding coat, and the rough roquelaure that she remembered the fastidious young gentleman qualifying as only fit for Nunky's bagman. As she removed these garments one by one from the depths of the box, her hand struck upon the corner of something hard and sharp, and, with an exclamation of pleasure, she lifted out a square, polished mahogany case, brass bound at the corners. Squatting back upon her heels, she opened it. Her father's pistols! Harry had been so proud to own them once, yet she supposed that they, too, must have fallen under the ban of the old-fashioned. Well, she could not pause to regret this want of filial piety now. She, who had been wondering how she could secure for herself this important asset in her desperate enterprise.

Her whole plot suddenly sprang up before her, armored and panoplied. A gallant, dashing, ruffling rascal—— Her heart swelled. She felt proud of this creation of her own courage; proud and a little afraid, but ready to back him up to the uttermost venture.

"A beaver to cock," she murmured, as she rose to her feet, opened a

drawer of the mahogany tallboy, and flung the hat it contained on her own head at an angle that of itself proclaimed the knight of the road.

Laden with her spoils, she returned to her room. The best way of concealing the results of her raid was to pack them at the bottom of the trunk, with some of her garments on top of them,

ready for the start.

Janet, the little red-cheeked maid, would be the last to question why her young mistress should begin to pack before she was warned of departure; and if she did, it would be easy to say that Mr. Wainfleet had spoken of the matter

-and gospel truth, besides.

She went through an anxious moment upon finding that the pistols, although in perfect condition—oiled and unrusted, and fitted with fresh flints—lacked ammunition. True, it had never entered her intention to make a murderous use of the weapons upon any one, least of all upon the venerable Woolcot; but to menace with empty barrels was a futile proceeding, and she quite thought that the firing off of a couple of shots harmlessly about his ears might be required if it should come to her having to play the footpad upon her uncle's emissary.

A renewed search in the empty bedroom next door resulted at last in the discovery of an old hoard of powder and shot. And she was able to load and prime her father's honorable weapons to her own satisfaction. She had no missish fears on the subject of fire-arms. Many a time and oft, in her country-life days, had she amused herself with these very Mantons; and beaten Harry, too, at the target—much to her sporting father's delight.

It was past four by all the city bells before Pamela laid her curly head upon her pillow, and—oh, spring of vital youth!—ere scarce another minute had fallen away, was soundly and blissfully

asleep.

Zachary, his teeth set till his thin lips almost disappeared in a single grim line of determination, went doggedly down the stairs till he reached the

kitchen landing.

He was about to betake himself to his truckle-bed-in the dark closet next the china cupboard, dignified by the name of "Zachary's bedroom"-when sounds approaching from the master's side of the house made him pause. He set his lantern to one side, drew his threadbare sleeves a trifle farther back from his bony wrists, and balled his hands ready to spring. To grapple, struggle with, and belabor some thief in the night would have been an admirable relief to him in his present mood. Moreover, a swift vision of the importance he might gain by heroic action in the defense of the house of Wainfleet rose in vivid colors before his mind, to be shattered the next instant by the appearance of his very respectable superior, Mr. Woolcot.

The old clerk, a flat candlestick in one hand, a couple of bundles that seemed a great weight clutched to his chest, was shuffling along, shaking his head and talking to himself. As he came into view of Zachary's light, he halted and started so violently that burthen and candle simultaneously escaped his grasp and fell to the ground; the one clattering, the other with a dull thud and an

"'Tis I, Mr. Woolcot, sir! Don't call!" cried Zachary. "Don't be alarmed -'tis only I, Muckleblane. I-I--"

odd metallic chink.

"Muckleblane, Muckleblane-" The head clerk was irascible at the best of times. He now entered upon an inconceivable state of agitation; placed himself before the objects on the floor and frantically waved back the other's ad-"And what the devil are you doing here, Muckleblane? Very suspicious, very suspicious! Tut, tut, away with you! None of your inter-

ference! I don't want your help. How? How? What do you say?"

"Won't you let me assist you to pick up the gold, sir?" said Zachary, in a curious voice of contained excitement. "It's escaped from the belt at your feet, Mr. Woolcot."

"How? How?" said the old man

again.

He looked down at the telltale gleam to which the ray of Zachary's lantern

pointed like a warning finger.

"Dear, dear! Tut, tut!" He swallowed two or three times; then, in an altered tone: "I am bringing the coin down to the safe from Mr. Wainfleet's room, Zachary. I-we have a large stock of specie in the house just now, and I did not wish the matter talked about." His accents grew firmer. "Mr. Wainfleet desired me to conduct the affair as privately as possible. To-morrow 'twill be lodged in the bank."

"Yes, Mr. Woolcot," said the junior humbly. He was on his knees already, gathering the sovereigns together into a heap between his palms and stuffing them into the gaping pocket of the belt. "Yes, sir, I meant no harm, sir. My mother was anxious about Mr. Wainfleet and bade me keep on the watch. I haven't been to bed all night,

sir, and hearing a noise-" "Yes, good lad, good lad! Give me that. I'll take your lantern. You can

keep my candle. To bed, Zachary, to bed!"

The old man turned toward the passage whence he had just emerged, halted, and rather staggeringly wheeled around once more.

"A silent mouth, Zachary, brings a lad farther in life than ever did a wagging tongue, mind that! I've got you

in my eye."

There was both promise and menace in the last words. With shuffling steps, he withdrew along the great stone passage.

Zachary took flint and steel from his

pocket, lit the fallen candle, and stuck it back into the candlestick. A forgotten sovereign winked at him from the corner where it had rolled. He weighed it in his left hand, while a smile began to creep over his countenance.

"Bringing the coin from the master's bedroom to the safe—round by the kitchen—at two o'clock in the morning," said he musingly.

Then his heavy eyebrows, almost startlingly red in the sickly pallor of his face, drew together in profound reflection. He walked across the flags to a gaping archway which led to the range of cellars below the kitchen basement. It was to these secret recesses, always carefully locked, that Mr. Woolcot had been bent with his treasure. Zachary belonged to that not infrequent type of humanity akin to the ferret, who find a zest in following the trail of a mystery for the mere satisfaction of solving it. He had now a strong motive to stimulate him.

"I've had ma doots these whiles back," he said to himself. "Hech, and I'm fair sure the nicht!" He weighed the coin again and slipped it into his pocket. "Guinea smuggling!" He turned up his eyes ecstatically. "Eh, my bonny Miss Pam, ye kem to the richt man when ye kem to poor Zachary!"

With buoyant steps he betook himself to his dreadful room. His fierce heart was singing as, once more in the dark, he sat himself down on his pallet to listen and watch with a deadly patience through the crack of the door which he had left ajar. He knew himself ill favored by nature and by fortune, and his ambition was as pure as it was intense. To win a smile, a word of thanks, to have served her! After that, he caressed the thought of death at her feet. It had been the passionately colored vision of all his youth.

### CHAPTER V.

Pamela's first evening at Downwick Grange remained in her memory as a confused, many-colored, slightly fevered, but on the whole delightful dream.

It had been a weary, long journey through driving snow and sleet. From the very start almost, the whole countryside had been hidden from her view by whirling, dazzling atoms; after the winter darkness had closed about them, the yellow glow of their lanterns still illumined nothing but the myriad dance.

Mr. Woolcot was a nervous fellow traveler. It was his ostensible mission not only to escort the young lady to her destination, but, after one night's rest at Downwick, to convey to Dover four cases of samples for an important business meeting. He was painfully anxious for the safety of these cases and equally desirous that Miss Cherryfield should not observe his anxiety.

In the first exhilaration of departure and the thrill of discovering that her goal was Mr. l'Estrange's home, she had amused herself by teasing the old man. What could possibly be the nature of the goods that inspired him with so much concern, she wondered; and she commented on the strangeness of the time of year chosen, the place selected for the transaction—swift to stab a discrepancy, and cruel in mischievous laughter at Woolcot's flustered indignation.

But by the time they had progressed halfway; her gay humor-had departed. Not only was she heartily tired of the journey, cold and ill at ease, but something of her companion's apprehensiveness had laid hold of her. She began to fancy a sound of pursuing hoofs, hailed with comfort the lights of each townlet and village that they traversed, and shuddered when the great spaces, all the more terrible to her imagination because of their invisibility, once

more closed around them, wind-swept. To the patter of the sleet in the pause of the voices of the gale, she still would strain her ear for that muffled beat of

pursuit behind her.

The arrival at Downwick was like stepping into a new world. Not only were the warmth, comfort, and safety that received her grateful alike to tired body and strained mind, but she thought it was like a kind of coming home. After those five weary years of repressed youth, after the gloom and the tedium of the city house, here was life again as she remembered it in her happy childhood-the scent and color of flowers, the blaze of hospitable fires in deep hearths, the cheer of innumerable wax candles, the pleasant spaces of inviting rooms, paneled white or darkly gleaming brown, gay with china and chintz. Best of all the kindly embrace with which her hostess drew her into her arms, the welcome that made her feel comforted to the heart.

True, there was a sting of disappointment in the fact that Mrs. l'Estrange was alone to receive her. The lady, with the same bright, claiming glance as her son's under a sweep of white hair, and something, too, in the sweet austerity of her delicate lips that brought the young man vividly before Pamela, said a few words of regret on

the subject.

"My son, Roland, would have wished to be here to-night, but he is absent on business. He trusts, however, to return at latest on Christmas Eve. I speak in his name as well as in my own when I bid you truly welcome to Downwick."

Both hands on the girl's shoulders, she held her at arms' length and gazed into her face with eyes full of such earnest scrutiny and meaning that Pamela felt herself crimson.

Then the old lady drew her close and kissed her again.

"My son was very anxious you should

come to us," she went on, in her delicate, precise voice. "He sent a special messenger from town to inform me of your coming. He does not, as a rule, desire company at Christmastide, but he is very particular to explain that he regards your kind visit, my dear, as a special occasion."

With this enigmatic phrase, Mrs. l'Estrange, declaring that it was close on ten o'clock, conducted her young guest to the bedchamber allotted to her, and announced a cup of special strong soup, flavored with marigold leaves.

"A family recipe, my dear, an invaluable specific against fatigue. A glass of elderberry wine—nay, my dear—I insist—a glass of elderberry wine, warm! I promise you, you will sleep."

She was a very stately lady and continued to be stately still as she nodded and winked with both eyes in confirmatory fashion. But Pamela had a restless eye and a hesitating manner.

"What is it, my dear?"
"Mr. Woolcot, ma'am-"

"And what of him, Miss Cherry-field?"

"Is he lodging here?"

She colored violently as she blurted out the question. Then, mendaciously, for she did not like the task of deceiving her kind, dignified hostess:

"I understand," she went on, "he is going away to-morrow. My uncle would like me—I think—I ought to see if he is able for the journey. He seemed very tired." Her tongue was more glib now. "He's very old, you know, ma'am. My uncle meant to come himself."

Mrs. l'Estrange stiffened very slightly up to the filmy wings of her wonder-

ful lace cap.

"Your escort, worthy man, is our guest to-night, child. He will be suitably lodged. Have no fear of that."

"And his luggage, ma'am?" Desperately the words broke from her. "Uncle Wainfleet said the cases were of the utmost importance. Mr. Woolcot was

so frightened for their safety during the journey-"

The stiffness vanished from Mrs. l'Estrange's air.

"Tut, tut, and he frightened you!" she said. "'Tis quite evident you're worn out! You're sadly nervous, my dear. Have never a fear. Your uncle's goods and his clerk and his niece are all equally safe under this roof. Nay, now, not another word! Here comes Betsy with your tray. Not another word, my love."

She bent over the girl, pressed a kiss upon her forehead, left a fragrance of rose leaves and lavender, and moved rustling—she wore a silver-gray tabinet and mightily it exame her—toward the door, leaving Pamela uncertain whether to laugh or to cry.

Pushed by the urgency of her purpose, she made one or two attempts to extract from Betsy some information as to the whereabouts of the clerk and his luggage, but receiving nothing but "La, miss, I'm sure I couldn't say," accompanied by bursts of giggles, she desisted; and, worn out, indeed, as her hostess had said, she allowed herself to be assisted into bed.

Whether it were the effects of marigold in the pottage or some insidious quality in the elderberry wine, it was a fact that Miss Cherryfield slept on to an unconscionable hour next day. She woke with a start and a throbbing heart and pulled fiercely at the rosy twisted bell rope that hung between her bed curtains.

Red-cheeked Betsy entered with a bounce and an explosion of amiable hilarity.

Dear, to be sure, miss had slept! Madam was pleased! Betsy had upped and wanted to bring miss a cup of tea this while back, it being gone eleven of the clock this hour back and more, but madam had as good as bitten her head off.

Pamela broke in with a wail, and Betsy stared, open-mouthed.

"Eleven of the clock! In God's

"Whatever is to do, miss?"

"Oh, Heavens, who shall say now! Tell me, girl, quickly! Mr. Woolcot the gentleman who came with me——"

"Gone this twenty minutes and more, miss."

A triumphant announcement it was. It seemed as if, in Betsy's plane of life, no news could be other than full of the most delightful significance. She resumed her goggle-eyed stare as the young visiting lady wrung her hands, clasped them desperately over her brow, and fell back upon her pillows as one struck with despair. Garrulity being Betsy's chief occupation, she proceeded to amplify:

"The old gentleman was in a mighty hurry to be gone, miss. And a queer old gentleman he is, so as you don't mind my saying as much of one that belongs to you, so to speak. Them four cases of his, one would have thought they held di'monds and rubies! Nothing would serve him but to have them in his room all night, so Joe tells me. Joe is second in the stable, miss, and it comes his way to carry boxes for the quality-" Here Betsy paused. Mr. Woolcot obviously not coming under this category, she added with a jerk: "And visitors-and such!" She took a long breath and started off with fresh vigor:

"Joe says to me he'd rather shoe Besom—that's the kicking mare, miss—twice over nor have to deal with such a crochetty, queer old body again, miss. Oh, that be a queer old gentleman, to be sure! Madam, she offer him a boy to drive—but, 'No,' says he. 'Not on no account!' He wish to drive himself, miss, all alone. It's my belief he thinks everybody's got an eye on them packs. Whatever do he have in them, to be sure? So they give him the black cob,

which is quiet as ever is. The black cob'll take the old gentleman to the Silver Tuns blindfold!"

Pamela emerged again from among her pillows. Her face was pale, but the gaze of her brilliant eyes was steady as she fixed them on the girl, and there was a light in them as they were looking through danger on some goal of triumph.

"How far is it to the Silver Tuns?" she asked.

"A good six miles, miss. 'Tis farther nor midway to Tougham, and that's nigh Folkestone. Though, to be sure, what with the snow on the ground and the snow that's like to come, and it all alone on the downs—lostlike—— Dear me, miss, and me forgetting all about your breakfast!"

"I will get up," said Pamela.

When Betsy returned, puffing and panting, with a laden tray, Miss Cherryfield was already before her mirror.

"Madam hopes you'll excuse her," cried the maid. "She's that busy to-day, being but two days before Christmas Eve, you see, miss. What with the doles—that's for the poor, miss—and having to have an eye to the stillroom and puddings and pies and that—and the Reverend Sweetapple—that's the clergyman, miss—up about the roasting of the ox—him that's roasted on the green, though, dear, to be sure, if the snow keeps on coming down—" Breath failed her; she gasped: "Madam begs you'll excuse her!"

Had it not been for her brother's dire need and the task she had set herself, nothing would have pleased Pamela better than to have begged to join in the glorious fuss of Christmas preparation. But how could she think of puddings and pies, and that without sickness, when every minute increased the distance between her and those cases of hidden treasure, wherein lay Harry's salvation?

She sat herself down, with a gloomy countenance, before the little table, spread with good things. Only that so much might depend on strength and quickness, she could scarce have brought herself to eat at all. But the next remarks of the indefatigably babbling Betsy brought back the savor to the crisp roll and the fragrance to the pot of chocolate.

"You'll maybe be wondering, miss, to see me that anxious like, looking out at the snow, and, praise be, there do seem a sign of it clearing up! But you do look so kind, miss, and, being, if you'll excuse my boldness, young like, same as I, you'll not think the worse of me, like madam! Terrible strict madam is. If as much as Joe passes the day with me and me shaking a duster out of the window, it's character and all that's gone, if you'd believe madam. And Mrs. Mellinch, she's the worst-she's the housekeeper, miss, her with the purple ribbons and the sour face on her as you may have noticed last night.

"But it isn't as if Joe weren't honest stock same as meself--- Have you got enough butter, miss? There's preserve in the little covered dish. And meaning honest, as I was saying, though the poor lad-I ask you fair and square, miss, how can the lad speak of his intentions when there's never 'so much as a buss has passed between us? 'Twouldn't be human nature like. But there! If I don't get a chance this Christmas, I feel as if I'd go desperate like. Yes, miss, I'm watching the window. Poor Joe, having to go all the way across the downs on master's horse, it being master's intention to pick up his horse at the Silver Tuns and Joe to bring back the cart the old man has off with this morning, master having gone straight by coach to Folkestone from London town."

Pamela looked up, a spoonful of the delectable strawberry jam-deep crimson in filaments of amber sirup—poised in her hand.

"Tell me that again," she said very quietly. "Your Joe-"

"La, miss, how you do go on!"

"At what time did you say your Joe starts for the inn?"

"After dinner, miss. Dinner bell will be a-going one of the clock as ever was. After dinner he do have to start. 'Tis a stableman's life, miss, terrible hard! Joggling up his vittles cruel, say I. But Joe, he dotes on it! 'Tis as good as a gentleman, says he. In at all the sport."

"A delightful life, I am sure," said Pamela. Her voice quivered with repressed impatience. "Especially if you ride your master's horses. Will Captain—Mr. l'Estrange, I mean—be expected back to-night?"

"That's what no one can tell, miss. Why, his horse do be waiting for him that way, at the Tuns, sometimes for days together. Dear, to be sure, the way master do roam, it's no wonder madam's that set on his marrying! All the young ladies we've had down here!"

Upon this Betsy stopped and surveyed Pamela, breathing stertorously, a sly intelligence struggling into her glassy gray eyes. For the life of her, Miss Cherryfield could not help the hot color mounting, spreading all over her throat, and rising to the roots of the loosened chestnut curls. So had she blushed under madam's investigating glance; and, remembering this, she blushed the more. Hurriedly she exclaimed, scarce knowing what she said:

"Joe and the cart—do you expect them back to-night?"

"Indeed, and pray Heaven, miss!"
The easily distracted Betsy again hurled her plump person toward the window. "Though to be sure, the old gentleman driving that slow—and so be no dreadful snowstorm do be vouchsafed us in the Lord's mercy! I set my heart, miss, on Joe being back to-night. Joe, he—

Joe I Joe and I, miss, we I know as how you wouldn't betray a loving heart——" Betsy hung a sentimental head and pleated her crisp apron between her large pink fingers. "Me having got leave to go to the village to bring the Christmas comforts to my granddam to-morrow morning, miss, 'twould be a cruel body would think bad of his meeting me and helping to carry the basket—but—"

Pamela no longer heard or saw. Some mental vision, at once alluring and alarming, absorbed all her energies. Mechanically she swallowed the spoonful of jam, and instantly became aware that she could not eat another morsel; that her heart was beating violently; that she had a hysterical inclination to burst into tears. Her only alternative was a meaningless peal of laughter.

Then her spirits rose. She felt as in the old, half-forgotten hunting days when she had put her pony at a fence, and her father, towering above her on the great chestnut, had been wont to call out to her: "Throw your heart over, Pam! Throw your heart over first!" What a fence was this that now rose before her! What a leap in the dark! Aye, but why should she fear? Had she not thrown her heart over first? The color came back to her cheeks, the sound of weakness died on her lips. She looked at nonplused Betsy gravely.

"I hope you and Joe will have your walk to-morrow. If ever I can help you to be happy some day, I will. Now I must quickly dress and you must bring me to Madam l'Estrange."

Madam l'Estrange was as deep in a fluster as a lady of her dignity and deliberation could well be. A batch of cakes had caught in the oven, and, indeed, there was a by no means unappetizing aroma of burned spice in the great stone passage that led to the stillroom. Warring with the potpourri in

the hall, it had guided Pamela to her hostess as demonstratively as Betsy. A haunch of venison had arrived unexpectedly from a relative in Scotland. Madam was calling out instructions for the marinade to the immense, rubicund cook who stood in the kitchen archway, a half-larded capon clasped against the crisp white bib of her apron. A little ruddy-cheeked, silver-haired gentleman in clerical attire stood behind the notable housemistress; he gave an unapprehending glance at Pamela over his horn spectacles, and resumed a contemplation of his notebook, in which he seemed to be calculating abstrusely.

"Lucky Wutherspoon—may I venture to remind you, dear madam, that Lucky Wutherspoon can no more chew the piece of beef you were kind enough

to---"

In a hesitating singsong the parson thus interrupted the list of herbs for the marinade.

"Gracious Heavens, man!" said madam. "If any one wrote, 'Beef to Lucky Wutherspoon,' 'twas yourself. Who knows the teeth that can chew in the parish if I do not? And is that you, my dear? I'm vastly pleased you've had so long a sleep. The young lady I was speaking to you about, Mr. Sweetapple! Nay, never mind, never mind, my love. He's lost in Christmas cheer. 'Twill wait a better moment. amuse yourself as you best can, Miss Cherryfield. I will meet you at two o'clock in the withdrawing-room, where, if you please, we will share a glass of wine and a slight refreshment. Pigott!"

The portly butler appeared promptly from his own region, upon this hail.

"I will accompany you this moment to the cellar, Pigott. I must have a couple of bottles of the eighteen-eleven claret for the venison, and I may as well give out the rest of the wine at the same time."

Pamela-however she might, at any

ordinary time, have felt offended in her young dignity at being obviously a negligible quantity—was profoundly grateful for being thus set free at this particular juncture of affairs. She withdrew hastily into the hall, and there paused, reflecting. As she stood, a grandfather's clock behind her struck a solemn, solitary note; and instantly a bell clamored in the courtyard without.

"The servants' dinner!" thought the girl.

If she could ever hope for a favorable opportunity to raid the stables, in pursuance of the daring plan she had conceived at breakfast, this was her moment! She remembered, on her way down the staircase, peeping out upon the stable yard through the long mullioned window on the second landing. She now made for that point of vantage with a flight like a bird. If the stablemen dined in the house, she would see them crossing the courtyard.

She ensconced herself on the low window sill and looked out eagerly through the strands of ivy that fluttered before the diamond panes. A stout, jovial man with a rolling gait—obviously the family coachman—crossed the snow-sprinkled cobblestones at an angle, followed by a couple of boys. Before disappearing from view, he halted and shouted over his shoulder: "Joe!"

Immediately the large stable door in front of her was opened and a man with an impudent face and a crop of upstanding, carroty locks popped his head out and shouted: "Coming!"

He disappeared within the recesses of the stable, leaving the door open; and Pamela's quick eye saw him busied in the semidarkness within. He was bitting a horse which stood, head forward, toward him in the stall.

"'Tis Mr. l'Estrange's horse, all ready for the start after dinner," cried Pamela to herself. Joe was taking time by the forelock. He, too, was anxious not to be kept overnight, lest he should

fail his Betsy.

She would not wait a moment longer: this was her time if ever-madam in the cellar with the butler, every servant in the place who was not hard at work larding and basting, spicing and stewing, busy munching. In a moment Joe would have joined the rest and she be free of the stables. Fortune had indeed favored her!

#### CHAPTER VI.

She locked herself into her room, drew the key of her trunk from her pocket, and proceeded, her hands trembling with haste and eagerness, to draw forth Harry's old riding suit, boots, cloak, hat, and box of pistols. It did not take long to cast off her own clothes and array herself in the masculine garments. Slight and youthful as she was, all the soft feminine curves of her figure disappeared, to her own thinking, quite satisfactorily in the square, loose fit of the suit.

She caught hold of her hanging curls, twisted them into a tight knot at the top of her head, and clapped on the high-crowned beaver, then cast the roquelaure about her. The collars both of the outer and inner coats were cut high and came well up to meet the brim of her hat at the back. She stared at herself, started, and then laughed aloud. It was Pamela no longer, but Harry.

Harry himself!

Then an exclamation escaped her. The throat, white as milk, and slender! She could not let it go bare like that. There was betrayal. What was it gentlemen wore? Pshaw! A stock! Fool that she had been, she had not thought to provide herself with neckgear! But when it comes to matters of toilet, women's wits are never slow to work: and Pamela's were of the readiest. Her muslin frock! Her only pretty party

gown! She rushed to the cupboard, laid hold of the filmy skirt, and cut an immense strip from waist to hem.

The effect of the high white folds, after she had dexterously manipulated them, was eminently satisfactory. She smiled at herself, struck an attitude, regretted-not for the first time in her life-that Providence had seen fit to make her of the softer sex, stuck a pistol into each pocket, made a couple of headlong steps toward the door, and paused.

The desperate disorder of her room could not escape the most casual glance. It would not do to have the hue and cry started a minute before it was inevitable. She caught up the narrow skirts from the floor and thrust them into the gaping trunk; then she proceeded to close the door upon the ruin of her embroidered muslin.

A pang stabbed her as she did so. What was she not sacrificing to Harry? The destruction of that delicate adornment-surely it included all her own budding hopes? How would those eyes that had haunted her ever since she had first come under their piercing regard estimate her now? The more daring gentlemen were, the more they liked their ladies to be quiet, gentle-mannered, and retiring. How often had her own dear mother preached this maxim to her in rebuke for her hovden ways! What would madam think of the madcap, of the desperate, unsexed creature who was so ill repaying her hospitality?

And this brought her to another thought. She could not find it in her heart to cause that dear lady who had welcomed her with such motherly kindness, surrounded her with such solicitude, gazed upon her with such meaning favor, anxiety and distress. She sat down to her writing table and wrote painfully, controlling as best she might the tremor of her hand:

DEAR MADAME L'ESTRANGE: Do not be anxious at my absence. I must go after Mr. Woolcot. It is a matter of urgent importance. I will return or give you tidings of myself as soon as I can.

PAMELA CHERRYFIELD.

Thereto, in a scarcely legible scrawl, she added:

I hope you won't mind my having borrowed Mr. l'Estrange's horse.

She folded the sheet, addressed it, placed it in a prominent position on her pincushion, and ran, clattering, out of the room and down the stairs through the quiet house. Her only safety lay, she knew, in haste.

The yard was deserted. The beautiful brown horse that stood just inside the open door of the stable, his reins hitched across a post, regarded her with full, thoughtful eyes, as she came up to him. He allowed her to lead him to the horse block and mount without protest. She settled herself astride as firmly as she might; and Mr. l'Estrange's steed picked his own way out of the yard toward the avenue.

Pamela and Harry had ridden from their earliest years. She had been proud of keeping up with her brother in all his games, and many a time they had caught their ponies and raced them, bareback, around the fields. Thus, riding had been second nature to her. Lucky for her that such early proficiency is not forgotten!

In the shade of a clump of trees she had to dismount and shorten the stirrup. The big horse indulged her maneuvers like a good-natured veteran amused by the gambols of a child. He permitted her to hoist herself on his back again and carried her in an easy canter across the park, along a side path which was evidently frequented by his usual rider as a short cut to the main road. Pamela easily opened the gate; and, emerging on the highway, trotted on toward the signpost which she sighted a little way off to the right. Having ascertained the direction, she

started at a brisk pace upon the road to Tougham.

Betsy's prayers were not like to be favorably answered, she thought, for the livid darkness of a snow cloud was gathering with portentous swiftness in front of her, and, as she presently emerged out of the sheltered roadway into the great expanse of the downs. she could see the snow battalions advancing in a solid phalanx like some terrible, mystic army. The wind blew cruelly in immense swoops. The salt of the sea was in it, and in its roar something of the hoarse voices of the breakers. The scene and the circumstances might well have daunted the bravest spirit; but Pamela encouraged her horse to a gallop in the teeth of the blast, and soon a kind of exhilaration began to pervade her whole being, out of the very heart of the danger and

As the full squall caught horse and rider, however, she was fain to draw up in the shelter of a little copse and let its fury expend itself. Gradually the stinging flakes began to clear of their first blinding intensity; ever farther and wider the great colorless wastes once more began to stretch themselves before her. Presently, somewhere in the far distance, a faint shaft of sunshine pierced; it lay like a yellow bar across the down, and in it glimmered a line of wet roof.

Pamela broke a dry switch off the hazel bush nearest to her, and with it brushed the snow from her own shoulders and the flanks of her horse. Then she lifted the reins, and that most superlative of all steeds set off again in its long stride. She determined to make for the house that lay in the spreading sunbeam, and from thence to take fresh orientation. The road, partly owing to original malice, partly to the melting snowdrifts, had become very bad; and prudence urged proceeding at a much slower rate. The sun ray, which had

begun to grow perceptibly, rose and disappeared with its shimmer of gabled roofs, as she jogged wearily through animmense hollow in the downs. And when she reached the top of the swell once more, not only was the short day closing about her, but the sudden darkness of another snow squall was spread-

ing around.

It was a substantial inn, the roof of which had thus beckoned from afar. Lights were gleaming out from its latticed windows; and, as it nestled in the folds of the hills, it looked to her at once the most lonely and the most companionable of places. She could now venture, without losing her way, to turn her horse off the road and canter toward it. She had a mischievous inclination to halt, call for the ostler, demand a cup of hot wine or the "dog's nose" of her father's hunting days, and toss it down in true gallant fashion on the saddle; but she was restrained by a prudent apprehension of the effect of the unwonted potation upon her feminine head. As she brought her steed to a foot's pace down upon the road again in front of the inn, a sight greeted her that lifted her heart more effectually than any stimulant.

A small, neat luggage cart, to which a powerful, stubby cob was harnessed, was drawn up before the open door. Ruddy light from within cast a deep amber glow upon the snow heaps drifted to one side of the porch and upon the stalwart figure of a barman who was just turning back into the house, shaking the dregs from the pint pot he held

in his hand.

Pamela wheeled swiftly and withdrew out of the line of vision. Well she knew the outline of that huddled figure in the cart, those three capes and the tied-up head! She had had quite ten minutes' amusement on her journey down from London in watching Mr. Woolcot draw a kerchief over his cap and tie it under his chin, oldwoman fashion. She knew that cough, too, querulously protesting against the weather and his own fate. Fortune had again played into her hands more quickly and more completely than she had ventured to hope. To meet her victim alone on this great waste, in a snow squall, darkness gathering about them! She could scarce even have imagined so excellent a concatenation of circumstances to facilitate her projected villainy.

She watched the slow, jogging departure of the cart. After due time had elapsed, she started herself in pursuit and soon came in view of the traveler again, keeping at just sufficient distance behind not to lose sight of his progress. This maneuver she pursued patiently for about half a mile, then drew rein

on a little eminence.

The downs swept away before her, singularly marked with varying whitenesses where the snow had been flung by the blast. In a rift of the lowering cloud bank she had a glimpse of the sun, a blood-red disk. To her left, some half mile away, a small fir wood stood out black on the discolored waste. The road curved around it, disappearing into it and reappearing, distinct to her vision by reason of an overhanging, continuous ridge of furze bush on the lee side of the wind, which marked it with a sinuous line, drawn as if by a paint brush dipped in Indian ink.

A second time she now deserted the highway, and with ever-increasing speed set out across the downs. Her intention was to cut off that loop of the road, skirt the fir wood, and emerge in front of the cart. The snowstorm was already flying up the vale toward them. She wished to make her dash in the very thick of it, from the shelter afforded by the wood.

Her heart beat quickly as she took her position at last, fairly well protected from blast and snow flurry by the trunks of a couple of giant fir

She drew one pistol from her pocket and balanced it in readiness, settled herself more firmly in her saddle, and pulled her hat brim down over her eyes. She hesitated upon the thought of tying a handkerchief across her face for disguise, but cast it from her. What would she care, after all, if Woolcot were to recognize her? She had taken no pains for concealment all along; and the best justification of her conscience was her firm resolve, once the deed was accomplished, to blazon the truth to her uncle. How little, indeed, would she care about being disgraced or disinherited by him! Was she not casting away hopes far more intimately dearas dear as they had been sudden?

Thus she sat, straining every nerve to The whole world seemed full of noise and fury. But they were not human sounds that beat about her; it was the clamor of the wind, with its great sea voices. It came tearing unimpeded over the empty spaces, to break itself in hissings and pipings against the little wood and fly on again, shouting. She felt an extraordinary solitude in the midst of this all-enveloping rumor. The livid gloom that the squall brought hung paralyzingly upon her spirits. Her horse shuddered under her.

CHAPTER VII.

She had meant not to emerge from her concealment until the cart was actually within sight, but a sudden terror of the possibilities of terror lurking in her own heart, of the danger of the cold that was creeping to the vital seat of energy, warned her that she must act and that promptly, or she might never act at all. She had already urged her horse cautiously out of the wood when a cry fell upon her ear-a cry of pain and anger.

Involuntarily she drew rein to listen. Again it came-a scream-

"Help! Help!"

"Quick, quick!" she cried aloud, and plunged forward, she and her brave steed both animated, it seemed, by the same spirit. The storm was at their back; it rushed them on. The flurry went with them.

Just those few moments of pace, of energy and self-forgetfulness, sufficed to restore her brave warmth of courage. She had to pull up swiftly, drawing the horse back on his haunches, or they would have leaped upon the cart. The cob stood, his head hanging, as if cowed by the storm. Behind him there seemed to be a struggle. She heard the sound of a blow-a dull thud that sickened her.

Woolcot-Woolcot, poor old man!horrible it was to her to see it !-fell in a heap upon his seat, and a ruffian leaped up upon the wheel of the cart. Pamela lifted her hand and fired straight at him in that one moment in which he stood poised, a hideous, masked figure of evil, all in the white dance of the snow. He went down, with a suddenness as complete and almost as dreadful to her as the old clerk's collapse.

The cob swerved at the sound of the shot; and she had to take her own horse around in a wide circle before she could bring him back to the cart again. Of all that day's tremendous experience, here was the most awful moment to her! It had been bad enough to be alone in the fierce play of the elements a little while ago; but how infinitely more appalling to be alone with those two motionless beings, both, perhaps, dead, one by her own hand!

Old Woolcot moved and groaned in the cart. Quickly she slid from her horse, slipped the reins over the bough of a tree, flung the smoking pistol to the ground, and drew the undischarged one from her pocket, in case that first aim of hers should not have been so deadly true, after all. She congratulated herself that she had done so, the

very next moment, for the man whom she trembled to have killed got up on one knee, and then to his feet. She raised her weapon, then dropped it quickly, for he was staggering and she saw that his right arm hung nervelessly beside him. The club with which he had struck old Woolcot lay between them.

"You know that I can shoot you!" she cried fiercely.

She wished passionately that he would run away and leave her alone to look after Woolcot. With an inarticulate sound in his throat, the man lifted his left hand and tore off his hat; the piece of crape that masked him fell at the same time. She stared at the livid face with terror.

"Zachary!"

"Yes, Miss Pamela, it's e'en mesel. It's Zachary. Hech, I thoct ye were Mister Harry till ye spoke."

"Oh, Zachary, Zachary!"

She was, indeed, nothing but a frightened girl now, overwhelmed with the fear, misery, and remorse of the situation.

"Oh, Zachary, Zachary, how could you? Oh, poor old man, how he groans! Oh, perhaps he's dying!"

Zachary's face worked. He looked as if he were going to break horribly into tears, but it was a ghastly smile he gave.

"He's not dying," he said, after a pause, between a couple of hard-wrung breaths. Before she could speak the question palpitating to her lips, with the odd prescience of the lover, he went on roughly:

"Nor I, neither. But I reckon my arm's broken."

Again he fetched a breath from the depths of his being.

"Good-by, Miss Pamela," he said then, wheeled, and took three or four reeling steps away from her. He stopped and looked back. "Make sure of the gold, Miss Pam. Now's your time."

He broke into a run and disappeared into the wood between the black trunks of the trees.

Pamela clambered into the cart over the four clamped cases into the front seat, and, sitting beside him, strove to raise Woolcot. She thought he looked dreadful as she succeeded at last in getting his head back against her knee. Suddenly she remembered the little flask of cordial out of which he had more than once sought solace in the coach, the previous day. Plunging her hand into his breast pocket, she drew it forth triumphantly.

The contents were evidently very strong, for, after a few drops had penetrated his closed lips, Mr. Woolcot started, choked, and sniffed. Then, to Pamela's delight, he put out a trembling, thick-gloved hand, guided the bottle himself in the proper direction, and took a perceptible gulp. The girl was so relieved to find him in such good case, after all, that the spirit of mischief seized her. She caught the flask out of his hand and sniffed at it.

"Oh, Woolcot, Woolcot! Cherry brandy, as I'm a living sinner!"

Laughing, she wiped it carefully, took a considerable mouthful herself, and coughed, startled. It seemed to run like fire through her veins.

Woolcot looked up at his rescuer. Horror and amazement were gathering in his blinking eyes.

"Good God, Master Harry!"

He drew himself away, and, groaning afresh with the effort, hoisted himself up on the seat beside her. His gaze of horror never left her face; but while she hesitated, wondering if it might not further her plans to keep up the delusion, he shattered the scheme in a single reproachful phrase.

"Oh, and to think you should come to robbing your benefactor! Oh, Mas-

ter Harry!"

"Harry! I'm not Harry! You're an old fool, Woolcot! Robbing, why—"
She pushed her hat back from her forehead as she spoke. "Look at me. That's not Harry, is it? Yes, it is Miss Pamela. You have a mean mind. I always knew it. I wish Za—" She caught herself up in time. No, it was the last of her purposes to betray that desperate, misguided villain of love! "I wish the footpad, whoever he was, who cracked you on the head, had cracked you a little harder. Yes, I do!

"Where would you be if it wasn't for me? He was standing on the wheel with his club up to whack you again when I shot him. I-I-Pamela! Look out there, if you don't believe me. That's his club and that's his bloodwhere I shot him. That's my pistol, too. Poor Harry, cast off and disgraced, it's not he who thought of robbing you. If there's any robbing to be done, I'm going to do it. Now, look here, Woolcot, it's no use mouthing and muttering. You haven't got any firearms, I believe. And if you had, you couldn't use them on me. But I've got another pistolsomewhere.

"Now, listen! I've found out all about uncle and the gold smuggling and everything. I was behind the door that night. Do you remember the creak? Well, it wasn't the wind. I've come after you just for that gold. you're going to give me your keys. Oh, yes, you are! Where's my pistol? Ah, thank you. You'd better help me, I think. What's that you say? Ruinruin-your trust? You shan't be ruined. I'm not a bad fellow, though I am a footpad. I tell you what I'll do. I want only one belt. I'll take the rest to the cave myself. I'll do thatnot for you, but for uncle! Uncle's a game old boy for all his texts, and I'm -I'm fond of him."

The old clerk put his hand to his head, mound two or three times, and held a rapid and noiseless colloguy with himself with a good deal of head shaking and contortion, his hypnotized gaze remaining fixed upon Pamela's countenance. At last, as, with an impatient gesture, she turned to the well of the cart and began to try the lock that faced her, he said:

"I've no strength to resist you. You must do as you please, Miss Cherryfield. You're a bold, bad young lady, and you must answer for it to the mas-

ter."

"Well, you're a pretty ungrateful old guinea pig. Why, but for me you would have lost, not one belt, but all the ten! Remember!" replied Pamela.

Her spirits had risen to exhilaration point. Perhaps even that mouthful of cherry brandy had put her a little off her balance. She felt primed for any emergency, not only ready, but longing.

Zachary's club had evidently done small damage. The old clerk's swoon had been caused more by fright and shock than by the strength of the blow, and probably the fashion in which he had tied his thick cap about his head had protected him. But he was still shaken and terrified, and either physically incapable of helping her, or obstinately averse to doing so. He sat huddled, grunting and groaning, while she opened and rifled the trunks of their precious contents-a piece of work that it took no small strength and enterprise to accomplish. Nine of the laden belts she secured to her saddle. Carrying the tenth in both hands, she stood before the cart and addressed Woolcot.

"Do you see what I am doing? I am putting this around my waist, under my coat, because I'm going to keep it. I shall account to my uncle for the money. It's my share of this bit of smuggling. It's only fair I should have a share in it, since I'm going to do the job for him. Tell me—how do I get to Tougham Cave?"

As he stared at her dumbly, his mouth working, she put her hand in her

pocket and just let him see the muzzle of her pistol. It was enough. The menace of that rim of steel would have cowed him to any surrender.

He told her without protest. About a couple of miles farther on, where the cliffs overhung the sea, she would find to her right a deserted barn. There all was arranged for putting up cart and horse and unpacking, and at nightfall the belts could be carried in safety down to the cave. There was a path from the barn through the cliffs. She would find rough steps leading down to the cave between two gorse bushes to the left. The agent would be in the cave an hour after sunset and the boat waiting outside. She was to answer to no one who did not give the password: "A just weight and balance are the Lord's." And the countersign was: "How much better is it to get wisdom than gold."

Pamela repeated the words with a laugh. That was Uncle Wainfleet all over, to bring his texts even into such a queer business.

She turned the cob around, not without some pulling and straining, glad of the warmth that the effort restored to her limbs. The unaccustomed weight of the belt around her waist added to the difficulty, but did not depress her. That gold had lifted such a burden off her heart. She handed the reins to Woolcot, and told him cheerily it was not far to the inn, where he could go to bed and sleep for a week if he liked.

"You can have some more dog's nose!" she called after him, mocking, as the cob, content to be facing home, broke into a steady trot. Then she uncovered her horse, rolled the rug into a bundle and laid it in front of her saddle over the belts, mounted, and started.

They pressed on, horse and rider, as gallantly as they might. She was anxious to reach the barn before that swift-fading light should have deserted the sky and the moonless night should have

fallen about them. It was all very well for that hardened old smuggler to talk so glibly of paths and cliffs and caves! She would have to make two, if not three, journeys with her load. She preferred not to break her neck in the dark. Once in the cave, she could wait in safety.

#### CHAPTER VIII.

It was quite black in the cave. Perhaps the strangest part of all that strange day's adventure, perhaps the hardest test of her endurance, belonged to those weary minutes of suspense and inaction that she was doomed to spend there waiting. The raucous, intermingled turmoil of the sea reverberated all about her in never-ceasing clamor, marked by the monotonous roar and dash of the angry waves that broke some hundred yards away upon the sand. There was little wind now, but the ocean unrest would scarce be allayed all the night through.

The patch of sky framed by the rugged entrance to her hiding place grew indistinct and finally disappeared. But presently-and her heart leaped to the comfort of it-the girl saw a star tremble dimly forth. She had had a moment's panic fear of the immense blackness shutting in upon her altogether, of the horror of being boxed about with the unpierceable dark. Now it was no prison to her, but an open place. Yonder, in that rift where the star hung, through which the great sea rumor came, some one would soon come in upon her. Some one! The guinea smuggler, Captain Smith-Roland l'Estrange! He would come in, and in the dark they would meet again.

What a singular, wonderful meeting it might be! What would he think to find her thus? Would she disclose herself? It would be impossible that he should believe her to be Woolcot. She could pretend to be Harry. But he might bring a lantern—no doubt he

would; he might look at her. And what use would pretense be before one single

glance of those eyes?

As she sat, huddled together on a stone, she shivered, and then grew scarlet in the night. A cordial more potent than Woolcot's cherry brandy seemed to be running through her veins—fire and sweetness and terror and exhilaration all combined; such a wine as only youth can drink of, and that, perhaps, but once.

A curious grating sound made her leap to her feet. She could distinguish subdued voices between the mighty shout of one dashing wave and the next. That was the boat. How silently it had drawn near! Her heart throbbed wildly in her ears. Footsteps crunched in toward her, and halted. She could feel rather than see the figure that stood between her and the outer night.

He spoke. The deep, low tones stirred her indescribably, as if some echo within her woke and answered.

"A just weight and balance are the Lord's."

The text sounded like music in her ear. She answered, under her voice:

"How much better it is to get love than gold;" then, with a cry, she corrected herself: "I mean wisdom!"

Confusion overwhelmed her. The word she had misplaced seemed to be written before her in letters of flame, throbbing with a dreadful significance. For a moment the cave became a shrine of tense silence, then the man said:

"Who speaks?"

His accents were curiously quiet, but there was a subtle alteration in them. Emotion seemed to come out from him and catch her. It was like a hand at her throat. She could not utter. A light flashed suddenly. He had drawn a dark lantern and was holding it close to her face. She had been prepared for that and braced herself. Again there was silence, while they looked at each other, but she heard him breathe as if

he were running. Thoughts rose faintly to be whirled away, before her brain could so much as grasp them, like straws in a whirlpool.

All at once her efforts seemed to die in her. She only felt that he was looking on her and she on him. It was as she had told herself. Before that gaze of his no attempt at disguise or subterfuge could avail. He knew her. He was reading into her soul. If she had wanted to raise a barrier, she could not have done it. She did not even know if she wanted it. He shifted the ray, and the spell was broken. Then she found words.

"Yes, it's I—Pamela Cherryfield. I've got the gold here for you. Uncle's ill, you know, and Woolcot was stopped by a footpad. I've brought them—the belts! They're here on the ground."

The lantern beam pointed to the pile at his feet.

"There are nine," he said. "There should be ten."

Now that she could no longer see him, the singular power of his gaze upon her was relaxed. Her mind began to work, her spirit to reassert itself. His absence of comment on her escapade galled her. His business question started resentment.

"I've got the tenth belt. I'm going to keep it. That's what I followed Woolcot for. That's why I dressed up like this. I'll answer for it to my uncle. That's my affair. Yours is to take charge of what I've brought you."

The light flashed upon her face again, and, wincing away from it, she fell silent. Her cheeks burned, and she thought, womanishly, that she must be scarlet, and that he would think her a fright. She did not know what his glance was saying to her, what thought it was that lay behind the strange fire of his gaze, but it was not distaste. Her own eyes were beaten down before his. She stammered and trembled. Then he said:

"Are you sure it is enough?"

"What?" She could not imagine what he meant.

"The belt you took." The wit to answer failed her, and he went on. He was smiling now, as she faintly saw. The light was switched away from her face. He continued in quiet, everyday tones: "Better make it do. I'll see that you get more later if you want it."

"Oh, I don't know what you think of me!" The words came at last with a rush: "It wasn't I stopped old Woolcot. It was—it was not my fault. But Woolcot couldn't have driven on here. He was too frightened. He'd had a knock on the head. I -wouldn't have hurt him. I—I had to have the money." A sob began to rise in her throat. She fell back on her first cry: "I don't know what you think of me!"

He had been stooping over the belts, but straightened himself now and took her hand.

"I think of you just one thing. I thought it the first moment I saw you. I cannot tell you what it is now. I will tell you—" He stopped. She felt as if in the barely lighted dimness his look completely laid hold of her. Then he dropped her hand. "I will tell you another time." And then, in that everyday voice that had offended her: "And now, Miss Cherryfield, my business takes me from you. Stand back a little into the shadow."

He whistled low. There was a thud of running feet, and two men came into the cave. She had a vague impression that they were dressed like fishermen. He gave a couple of orders. They seized the belts and departed. When the sound of their cautious steps had died away, he came close to her.

"How will you get back? Did you come in the cart?"

There was the stress of both haste and anxiety in the quick question he now put to her.

"No." She hesitated. "Woolcot had

to keep that. I—I"—whatever happened she would be brave with him— "I took your horse—your brown horse. It was ready saddled. The men were at dinner. I left him safe in the barn at the top of the cliff, covered up."

He drew a quick breath as of relief. "He'll take you back, right enough. Let him go his own way. He's surer than many a comrade. Go straight back home, back to Downwick. Stay, I'll give you a line to my mother."

He drew a notebook from his pocket and wrote hastily, tore out the leaf, folded it, and handed it to her.

"I leave you the lantern. Good-by. Keep brave. You're in no danger. Don't leave the cave for a few minutes, and hold the light low."

He did not touch her hand again. He went out with firm strides, but in a second wheeled around. He stood in the entrance of the cave, the star now brightly scintillating over his head.

"How much better it is to get love than gold. That was a good text of yours!" A tender laughter ran through his tone. "I shall be back at Downwick on Christmas Eve, God willing!"

Then he was gone. Her knees gave way beneath her as she sat down on the stone, the paper he had given her clasped in her hand. She heard the grating of the keel, strange, confused, muffled noises, no sound of voices, no beat of oars. Then nothing but the waves' turmoil. Secretly as the gold smugglers had come, they were gone; out into the great, tossing waste, into their peril and adventure.

The brown horse brought his burthen into the courtyard of Downwick Grange—the coachman afterward averred—as wise as any Christian. There were plenty of people on the lookout, for great had been the agitation and anxiety in the household all day; and, though news had been received of the arrival of Mr. Woolcot at

the Silver Tuns, he had declared he knew nothing of the young lady's whereabouts.

Pamela sat swaying on her saddle, staring and smiling vaguely at the lights and the faces, without attempting to dismount. When they lifted her off,

she swooned away.

Madam l'Estrange would allow no one to attend to her but herself. As she loosened the manly clothes, she found and removed the heavy belt of gold, which she immediately hid away in the trunk. When she came back to the bed, the girl had stirred slightly, lifting one hand to her breast. From beneath it, over the feebly beating heart, the old lady took a folded paper which bore, inscribed in her son's handwriting: "For my mother."

She carried it over to the light and unfolded it. Within, the brief message

ran:

Mother, take care of Pamela for me.

### CHAPTER IX.

It was ten o'clock on Christmas Eve. Pamela lay on the sofa, alone in the pretty, white-paneled, chintz-bright room that was called madam's parlor. She knew that, faithful to his promise, Roland l'Estrange had arrived at Downwick about an hour before, and that he was now having supper with his mother in the dining room. She had

been served apart.

Madam had nursed her these two days with a severe yet tender authority. She had not asked a single question; she had refused explanation; she had even forbidden conversation. But there was something in the expression of the kindly, chiseled face, as delicately tinted in beautiful old age as one of those frail roses that bloom in sheltered corners of old walls when the summer is over—something of gentle, restrained emotion that made the girl take heart of grace. And, twice to-day, she had

spoken words that to the eager ears were rich with promise. The first was in answer to Pamela's question, hazarded at last that morning:

"Your son gave me a message for you, ma'am. I trust I did not drop the

paper."

"No, my dear, you did not drop it. You had it quite safe. I took it and read it."

There was a long pause.

"May I—may I know what was in it, Madam l'Estrange?"

"You didn't read it, then?"

"Oh, ma'am!"

"Well, my dear, since your honor was nice enough to prevent you from looking at the contents of that open scrap of paper, I think we had better leave it at that a little longer."

Perhaps it was the disappointment in the girl's face that made the old lady

add, after a pause:

"No doubt my son Roland will tell you anything you wish to know before

very long!"

Upon that ambiguous remark, and the faint twinkle in the eyes that accompanied it, Pamela had striven to rest her unquiet thought in all the waking moments of that second long, drowsy day.

It was after bringing her a little dish of tea, just at the hour when the gay wood fire in her room began to hold its pleasant sway over the encroaching shadows, that Madam l'Estrange had made her second encouraging speech:

"I hope, Miss Cherryfield, that you may feel sufficiently reposed to come down for a short while this evening. Just into my parlor. I shall insist on your not rising from the sofa. It being, I understand, my son's intention to be back home with us some time this afternoon, he would, I know, be disappointed not to be able to see you tonight."

Pamela's heart had begun to beat so fast that she could scarcely reply, but

overlooking her agitation with a very dignified courtesy, madam had gone on:

"That is well, then. I have had your muslin dress mended, my dear. Mrs. Mellinch is a very neat sewer, and I do not think the patch at all observable."

It was in the little best white gown that Pamela was now attired, accordingly; and she lay, as ordered, on the narrow sofa that had gilt lions' heads on each curved arm. She lay because she dared not disobey, but it was very irksome to her to keep those slender, sandaled feet of hers extended quietly before her, and not let them carry her restlessly about the room.

The door opened, and Roland l'Estrange came in alone. She sat bolt upright and turned her head to look at him. She could not utter a word. He stood still, gazing at her as if no fairer sight had ever greeted a man's eyes. Then he advanced; took her hand in silence. Still holding it, he sat down on the spindle-legged chair beside her.

After a while, seized with an overwhelming self-consciousness, she drew her fingers away. He said quickly:

"Things cannot be between you and me as with ordinary people—conventions, fine manners, preliminaries! Do you want all that of me now? No, you cannot! Pamela, from the first instant I saw you, I knew—" She questioned him with a swift, half-frightened, half-audacious glance. "I knew," he said, "that I had found my wife." "Oh!"

"Pamela!" He was kneeling beside her now. "Is it not true?"

And with that his arm went about her.

Life opened before her, new and wonderful, filled with a rosy radiance. But the Diana spirit that dwells in every pure maiden soul sprang armed, resentful of the sudden attack. One breathing space she let him hold her to his breast, heard the great beating of his heart beneath her ear, and gave herself to the tide of joy. But the revulsion was swift. She tore herself from his grasp, pushed him from her, rose trembling and panting.

"No, no, I can't! I—I don't know you! You know nothing of me except —except the dreadful thing I've done!"

He had sprung to his feet. He was all at once as quiet again as she was agitated. In the pause that came between them, his claim went forth and laid hold of her as in those dark minutes of the cave. Resistance was easier when his eyes were not upon her. She could fling from her the grasp of his strong arms; she could not release her soul from the soul that looked out upon her.

"Pamela, my wild bird!"

She swayed toward him, with down-cast lids.

#### EPILOGUE.

MY OWN DEAR, DEAR HARRY: Oh, my own Harry, everything is all right! The same sure messenger that brings you this will have lodged at the bank six hundred pounds. Six hundred pounds! Six hundred pounds! So the dreadful debt can be paid, after all, and your poor Pam has not failed of her promise. Did you not do well to trust me? Did I not say I would save you? And, oh, Harry, there is better news still! You are to have a commission in the army and a proper allowance, and I know-oh, I've promised for you-that you will be good and steady and never gamble and bet and back bills again!

You'll wonder how all this has come about. It seems like a fairy tale. And I can't even begin to tell you. It's such a long, odd, mad story, and I've done such dreadful things, and it's ended right, I don't know how! Oh, yes, I do! It's because he—he is still a stranger to you—is the best, dearest, kind-

est, most wonderful being in the whole world. And it's Mr. Roland l'Estrange, and oh, Harry, I'm the luckiest girl that ever was born, because—perhaps you've guessed—I'm going to

marry him.

I've told him all about you, brother dear, and how you can't settle to the horrid work of copying and scrawling, and how you can't bear the stuffy, dark rooms and the stupid lawyers after our open-air life and the hunting and the comrades and the horses and the dogs and the guns and all that you were brought up to, all that you were accustomed to in the good old days. I've told him how uncle thwarted you, and how he wants to make a dull, learned man of you. And I've told him, too, that it's only because you're unhappy that you've taken up with those wild young gentlemen and the cards and the

He says he believes in everybody having his chance, and that if you're in the profession you like, it's ten times more easy to keep straight. And he's going to make uncle understand all this, and he's not a bit afraid of uncle. And it seems he knows uncle will be so prodigious pleased about us—Roland and me—that he won't mind what I've done.

And, oh, Harry, the gentleman who brings you this letter, Roland says you're to trust him absolutely and put everything in his hands and let him settle the bill for you, for he is Mr. l'Estrange's own lawyer. His name is Smith, too. Oh, I forgot. I'll tell you all when you come. And this is almost the best of everything—you're to come down here as soon as your business is settled, and spend New Year's at Downwick, and learn to know my Roland, and see for yourself how happy I am. And Roland is writing, too.

It's quite late at night, but I couldn't write before, because Roland wouldn't let me out of his sight. And, as it was, we kept saying good night to each other, just like Romeo and Juliet, for nearly an hour on the stairs, till Madam l'Estrange came out of her room and laughed and scolded us. She didn't really mind, because Boxing Day is just the last of Christmas. She just said: "Think of all the happy Christmases you'll have together, children!" And I said: "Oh, but we'll never have this one darling Christmas again!"

You've no idea how silly Roland was when I said that. I never could have believed—(Here Miss Cherryfield had elaborately crossed out a phrase.) It is true. I've had the most glorious Christmas! So blessed, too—the little church in the snow and my heart so full of thankfulness and love! Your

ever devoted sister,

PAMELA CHERRYFIELD.

P. S.—Madam l'Estrange, my new mother, is kind and grand and beautiful, and I love her. She is very glad that I am going to marry her son, because, as she said to me: "He loves danger, my dear, for the mere sake of danger, and a wife will teach him that his life is precious." We've promised her, both of us, we'll never, never do any more smuggling. I'm always forgetting—you'll have to wait to know what I mean till you come here.

Dear brother, I've opened this letter again. I'm afraid happiness makes one rather selfish. It quite escaped my memory to tell you I had a missive from poor Zachary-Zachary Muckleblane. He came down somewhere near here to spend his Christmas holiday. Wasn't it funny of him? He always was like nobody else. And he got hurt somehow: I think it's his arm that's broken. Somebody else wrote his letter for him-a sailor. He doesn't want his mother to be frightened, so he says please will you tell her he's doing all right, and she's not to be anxious. But he's never, never going back to be uncle's clerk any more. He's going to

be a sailor, he says, and she's not to expect to see him till he can bring her

some money.

Will you go yourself, dear Harry, and tell her this? She was always so fond of you. And Roland says, as uncle is so bad with the gout, he need never know you're there. And after your visit here, Roland says he will himself bring you to uncle and make everything quite straight, just as I've promised you. I was sorry for poor Zachary, but Roland thinks it will do him good to be a sailor, and that it will be twice the life for him.

And, oh, Harry, I'm too sleepy for words, but I must just tell you. I've had such games with old Woolcot, you can't think! He's at a little inn some miles from here, with the most dreadful cold in the head anybody ever had. You'll think everybody is down here. I have such things to tell you!

Roland went to see him yesterday.

He doesn't want him to go back to uncle till our messenger has gone, so he assured him he'd certainly die if he traveled when he's sneezing so dreadfully. He was so funny! He told me Mr. Woolcot was sitting before a roaring fire, with his head tied up, and the landlady's thickest shawl round his shoulders, and his feet in mustard and water. Roland said he was drinking gruel, but I say I know it was dog's nose.

One last P. S., Harry dear. I don't suppose you read your Bible much now. I'm afraid I haven't, either. Uncle was so fond of texts, it made one rather sick of them. There's a text that says, I believe: "How much better it is to get wisdom than gold." Madam I'Estrange found it for me. It's in "Proverbs." But I got it all wrong, and I said: "How much better it is to get love than gold." And—isn't it profane?—Roland declares he likes my version much better than the Scriptures'.



## AFOOT

UPLAND! Upland! Forth on a sturdy faring!
Forth to see the lambs at play, the wanton robins pairing!
Forth to dare the fanged winds, March month sends a-sweeping,
Cleaning fire through sedge and brier to wake the grasses sleeping.

March month is a man month—rough, strong, but a master. Hear his shout to the waxing sun: "Faster! Faster!" Faster!" Hear his roar to the fanged winds: "Dry to dust my fallows!" Soft cry to soft airs: "Swift bring home my swallows!"

Oh, life, I think, is a March month, rough, strong, but a master. If he smile to the love winds: "Blow!" Life goes faster, faster. If he frown: "Rend! Roar!" Oh, then the hate winds harry—Cut, thrust, gash, slash—with javelins none may parry.

Upland! Face him down with never a laggard resting.

So shall we win to the cedars green, the long slope cresting.

MARTHA McCulloth-Williams.





S. MARK STANTON'S beautiful drawing-room in her flat in Park Lane lay shrouded in darkness. In the soft glow of the firelight, the

pink legs of the satin chairs glittered like gold. Great bunches of white lilacs and lilies of the valley perfumed the room as if it had been a garden. They glimmered in the flamelit twilight like exquisite ghosts.

Over the mantelpiece, Mrs. Mark Stanton's picture, her defiant beauty guarding the soft wonder of her little two-year-old son, smiled radiantly down on all the lovely things collected for her benefit, as if she, like Voltaire before her, found that all was for the best in this best of all possible worlds.

Suddenly the door opened, the lights flashed up, and a young man came in.

He was an extraordinarily good-looking young man, with that languid air of bored self-possession that seems to go inevitably with long legs, curly hair, and perfectly fitting clothes.

He looked around sharply, shut the door carefully behind him, and, going to the writing table, picked up the Dutch doll, with the voluminous pink tarlatan skirts, large round face, and beady black eyes, that his wife was

pleased to consider a more suitable adjunct for her Marie Antoinette writing table than a mere post-office telephone.

"Silly ass!" said he to the doll.

He whisked it around disdainfully, and, discovering the receiver carefully concealed in its pink satin back, demanded the number of his friend who lived in the flat above.

The following interesting conversation ensued.

"Hello! Hello! 9346 May." Pause. "Hello!" Pause. "That's what I said." The topmost pink tarlatan flounce overflowed into his mouth at this minute, and he viciously smacked the Dutch doll, who stared blandly back at him out of her round black eyes. "Simpering ass!" he said furiously. "Hello! Hello! Is that you, Burton? I'm Mr. Mark Stanton. Ask his lordship to come to the telephone a minute, will you?" He filled up the pause that ensued by putting his finger at regular intervals through the pink tarlatan flounce and ripping it as hard as he could. "Hello, is that you, Doddy, old man? I say, can you come down for a few minutes?" Pause. "Oh, curse your dinner! What does dinner matter? What's that?" Pause. "Oh, yes, I've had mine." Pause. "No, nothing wrong, only we've

had the hell of a row." Pause. "Yes, much worse than usual." Pause. "I say, don't give it away I asked you to come down. What? No, ask for me." Pause. "Thanks awfully, old man. So long. Here, I say, Doddy. Doddy! Oh, damn!"

Catching the sound of high heels coming down the polished boards of the corridor, he slapped the Dutch lady back onto the telephone, nipped across to the white hearthrug, and stood lounging, with his back against the white-wood mantelpiece, the personification of bored indifference, with about as much animation in his handsome young countenance as the china doll who, trailing pink tarlatan clouds of glory, hung rakishly head downward with her black china feet dangling in the air.

In another second the door was flung open and his wife whirled into the room.

Mrs. Mark Stanton was about the prettiest thing in petticoats-or rather out of them, for she didn't wear any -that it ever had pleased a beneficent Providence to let loose in a world inhabited for the most part by long-suffering and susceptible young men. Her eyes were dark gray; her long lashes, which curled upward in the most upsetting way, were black; her skin, which was milk white, served as a pleasing background for her ears, which were shell pink, and her hair, which wasthere are no other words for it-ambrosial gold. Her figure, which she carefully concealed in shapeless garments that cost her dressmakers about tuppence and her husband about fifty pounds apiece, was exquisite. Her feet -she took twos-were, as she plaintively confided to her friends-who mostly took eights—distressingly small. She and Mr. Mark Stanton had been married five years.

She entered the room, as I have said, like a whirlwind, ran forward a few steps toward the writing table that had belonged to the ill-fated Marie Antoinette, and then, catching sight of her husband, stopped short.

"Oh, is that you?" Yawning ostentatiously, she advanced languidly into the room.

"Any objection?" said Mr. Mark Stanton, surveying her remotely.

"Objection to what?"
"To its being me?"

"Why should I have any objection to its being you?"

"You sounded as if you had." He took out his gold cigarette case with his monogram in blazing diamonds and languidly lighted a cigarette.

Mrs. Mark Stanton eyed the proceedings coldly. "If you choose to put a wrong interpretation on everything I do and say, that's not my fault."

"Naturally," replied her husband pleasantly. "Nothing's ever your fault!"

"That's the first true thing you've said to-night."

"Oh, I'm a liar now, am I?"

"Why now?"

"Thanks." He dropped his match into the mouth of a green enameled frog held open for the purpose, and began to smoke.

Mrs. Mark Stanton advanced to the edge of the hearthrug and stuck out an artless little foot to the blaze. "Do you want *all* the fire to yourself?"

Her husband dashed to the extreme edge of the white bearskin—which he had imperiled his own life to secure—with such surprising energy that it slipped from under him and he nearly fell on his Grecian nose.

"Good God, can't a man even warm himself at his own fire in his own room?"

"It's not your own room," returned his wife pleasantly. "The drawing-room's my room."

"If it comes to that, seeing I pay the rent, I think every room in the place is my room."

"If it comes to that, seeing I pay for

the coals, I should think every coal in the fire is my coal."

"Oh, go to the devil! Keep your coals!" Mr. Mark Stanton chucked his cigarette into the fire and furiously left the room.

"I thought that'd get rid of him," Mrs. Mark Stanton remarked to herself joyously. "Beast!" . She surveyed her exquisite reflection in the mirror on the mantelpiece with pensive satisfaction until the door banged. Then she fled across the room and snatched up the Dutch doll. "Darling!" she exclaimed ecstatically. As she spoke, she caught sight of the yards of torn tarlatan enwreathing that lady's chaste extremities. "Good heavens! Who on earth's done that? Him, of course!" Her pretty nose went up in the air and the corners of her mouth went down. "Beast!" She snatched up the telephone, and, like her lord before her, overflowed into the pink satin back.

The following interesting conversa-

tion ensued:

"Hello! Hello! Why on earth don't you answer? Hello! Hello! Do you think I've got nothing else to do but wait here all night? If you're rude to me, I'll make a complaint. Now, then, if you please, 9346 Mayfair. No, six—four, six. No, six—" It's really as tonishing what a thumping row a number-two foot in a white satin shoe embroidered in roses, with a real diamond buckle in front, can make.

"Oh, dear! I believe you're doing it on purpose. Yes, you are. Well, then, why don't you stop talking and attend to your business? 9346. That's what I said." Pause. "Hello! Hello! Who's that?" Pause. "There's no need to shout. Who is it, please?" Her voice changed suddenly to the silvery tones she kept exclusively for the purpose of cajoling "something nice" out of cabinet ministers for her protégés or lowering the price of a model Parisian hat. "Oh, Doddy, dear, is that you?

Doddy, do be an angel and come down! I must see you at once." Pause. "Yes: most important." Pause. "No, nothing wrong, only Mark's a perfect beast." Pause. "No, a beast." Pause. "Oh, dear, how tiresome you are! I said a beast. Yes, a perfect beast! treat, a beast!" Pause. "Yes. B for beast!" Pause filled by plaintive murmurings from other end of the wire. "Oh, bother your dinner! What does dinner matter?" Pause. "Oh, yes, I've had mine." Pause. "Oh, will you, really? That's sweet of you." Pause. "Right away, won't you?" Pause. "I say, Doddy, don't give it away I asked you to come down, will you?" Pause. "Thanks frightfully. Good-by."

She hung up the receiver, then snatched it off the pink satin hook again. "I say, Doddy, Doddy, don't forget — Doddy! Are you there? Are you there? Hello! Hello!" Pause. "I say, exchange! Exchange! What have you cut me off for? I say, what have you cut me off for?" Pause. "I didn't! I say, I didn't." Pause. "I distinctly state I did not. Very well, give me the supervisor. No, not the number, the supervisor. What? What? The supervisor's engaged? The super-

visor's always engaged."

She banged the telephone onto the table so hastily that the lady from Holland lost her balance and fell sprawling, head downward, dangling from the hook.

"Simpering beast!" said Mrs. Mark Stanton, furiously slapping the cheerful countenance. "Atrocious service! I shall write to the *Daily Mail*." She rang the bell and flung herself into a chair.

The butler must have been standing on the mat as they do at the theaters, for the next instant the door silently opened and the gray-headed archbishop who kindly condescended, on occasions of stress, to hand Mrs. Mark Stanton the potatoes and the cauliflower came in. A connoisseur would have detected instantly, from the angle of his head and the blankness of his eye, that he was accustomed to the highest circles of society. As a matter of fact, during a previous episode of his professional career, he had condescended to buttle for a duke.

"Edwards, I'm expecting Lord Burchington. Show his lordship in here when he comes."

"Very good, madam."

"And serve coffee in here."

"Very good, madam." He waited for a moment, then silently evaporated it would be sacrilege to say disappeared.

Left to herself, his mistress, who had barely swallowed the last mouthful of a most excellently cooked five-course dinner, opened a delicate pink satin box that lay on the table beside her, and proceeded to stay herself with chocalates; what time, to the tune of a gay little refrain concerning one "who didn't want to do it," she withdrew a pink silk powder puff from a china jar hidden behind a silver mirror and delicately powdered her dainty nose.

"'Sometimes you made me feel so bad,'" caroled Mrs. Mark Stanton, with gray eyes uplifted, like a saint on a tombstone, and a voice as sweet as a thrush's. Then she shut the pink satin box, put the powder puff back in the china pot, adjusted the pale-pink satin cushions behind her golden head, and disposed her little feet on a little gilt footstool, to await the coming of her

Lord Burchington was a fascinating person past his first youth, with a genial manner and an irresistible smile. He held the unique position of being father confessor to every pretty young woman in London, and of not being in love with one. The minute he appeared, forgetting all about her carefully arranged footstool, Mrs. Mark Stanton jumped off of her chair and rushed at him with outstretched arms.

"Oh, Doddy, what ages you've been!"
"I-like that!" replied the virtuous
Doddy. "I didn't even wait to finish
swallowing my cutlet."

"Oh, bother your cutlet!" said Mrs. Mark Stanton, with the well-bred brutality of a person who's had a thundering good meal.

"My dear child, it's my cutlet that's bothering me." He put his hands to his chest dramatically. "I can feel the bone distinctly, not to mention the frill."

"Do leave off talking about eating! What on earth does dinner matter?"

"You'll find nothing else matters when you get to my age." His shrewd eyes looked at the beautiful, flushed face over his glasses. "Well, what's the matter with you?"

Mrs. Mark Stanton was nothing if not dramatic. She flung out her small hands, sparkling with the most expensive diamonds, in the most impressive way.

"Doddy, it's come at last!"

Unhappily Lord Burchington was too accustomed both to hands and to diamonds to be easily impressed. "What's come?"

Mrs. Mark Stanton opened her gray eyes until they looked like saucers. "The end."

Still the excellent Doddy remained cold. "What end?"

"The end between Mark and me."
"Oh, is that all? In that case, I can
go back and finish my dinner." He
turned to go, but she clutched at his

"Doddy, don't be silly! This time it's serious."

"That's what you said last time."

"This time it is." The beautiful, frivolous little face flushed a most becoming rose. "I leave Mark to-morrow for good."

"Well," said Lord Burchington cheerfully, "that's better than leaving him for bad."

"And it's not going to be separation,"

announced Mrs. Mark Stanton. She drew her slim figure up to its full height and nodded her golden head triumphantly. "It's going to be divorce!"

"No!"

"Yes!"

"Honest Injun?"
"Honest Injun."

"Good-by," said Lord Burchington. "I'm off."

"Off?" cried Betty Stanton. "Off where?"

Lord Burchington made a dive for the door. "To tell the news, of course."

You should have seen Mrs. Mark Stanton skip across the room! "Good heavens, you mustn't tell anybody! It's a dead secret. Nobody must know."

"How are you going to prevent 'em?" he demanded. "The servants'll know. Your tradespeople'll know. Your friends'll know. Your enemies'll know. The papers'll know. Ha! Ha! The boys in the street'll know. Everybody'll know."

Betty Stanton threw up her beautiful head and the diamonds in her little pink ears twinkled like mad. "Let them know, then! What do I care?"

"Of course, you don't care. It's the others who'll care. My God," remarked Lord Burchington, lost in introspective delight, "won't Susan be pleased!"

A look that had not been there an instant before flashed into the limpid gray eyes.

"Susan?"

Lord Burchington's irresistible smile spread over his clean-shaven countenance.

"I say," he said coaxingly, "you must let me tell Susan. She'll be off her head with delight."

For once, however, Mrs. Mark Stanton apparently found the irresistible smile not at all irresistible.

"What's it got to do with her what

"Not what you do, my dear child, but what Mark does."

"Mark! What's Mark got to do with Susan?"

Lord Burchington gayly waggled a protesting hand. "Nothing, my dear child. Nothing." He began to chuckle darkly. "But it won't be long before Susan's got a lot to do with Mark."

"Do you mean she's in love with him?" said Betty Stanton shrilly.

A great actor was lost to the world when fate made a peer of the realm of George Burchington. You should have seen him jump!

"What, didn't you know?" He bent his head from his great height down to a level with hers. "I say," he whispered insinuatingly, "don't tell him I told you, will you?" He took a step back and considered her afresh. "Fancy your never knowing about him and Susan! Ah, well, it's an ill wind that blows nobody good. Now, poor old Susan'll get a look-in."

The rose pink on the peachlike cheeks deepened to an ominous red. "Well, she won't get a look-in with Mark."

"What's the betting?"

"Anything you like." Like most losers, Mrs. Mark Stanton plunged recklessly. "Mark says he'll never look at another woman as long as he lives."

Lord Burchington shouted with laughter until the crystal chandelier positively trembled with delight. "Oh, oh! Ah, ah! That's good! That's quite good!"

"I don't see anything to laugh at," remarked Mrs. Mark Stanton, in a dis-

tinctly chilly voice.

"Oh, nothing. Nothing. Only the idea of Mark— Oh, my goodness, Mark, eh? You see the women letting a handsome chap like Mark alone, don't you?" He stopped laughing, and his voice took on that quality which is known as likely to wheedle the birds off the bushes. "He is handsome, isn't he?"

"I never said he wasn't."

"And so tall!" He lost himself in

a passion of contemplative admiration for the absent Mr. Mark Stanton's superfluous inches. "He has a fine figure, hasn't he?"

"I never said he hadn't."

"And such a dear, good, generous, kind-hearted, honorable chap!" He eyed the disdainful profile, fine as a cameo and hard as flint, with something approaching timidity. "He is a dear, good, generous, kind-hearted, honorable chap, isn't he?"

"I never said he wasn't."

"And yet you're not satisfied!" Lord Burchington surveyed her with the pensive interest of the true psychologist. Then a broad smile slowly irradiated his mobile countenance. "I say, won't his mother be pleased?"

Mrs. Mark Stanton turned a lively red. "Let her! The old pig! I hate

her!"

"She always said you wouldn't make

him happy."

You should have seen Mrs. Mark Stanton's eyes! "It isn't me who hasn't made Mark happy. It's Mark who hasn't made me happy. He's a beast!"

Lord Burchington drew back in alarm. "Why, you said only just now what a dear, good, generous, kindhearted, honorable chap he is!"

"I didn't say anything of the kind," she interrupted furiously. "It was you who said that. You've done nothing but say nice things about Mark ever since you came in."

"I've not said anything that isn't true,

have I?"

"You haven't said tons of things that you might have said that are just as true. I didn't send for you to come and tell me nice things about Mark. I sent for you to come and comfort me."

"But what do you want comforting for, my dear child?" he exclaimed, aghast. "You want to be divorced,

don't you?"

"Yes, I do want to be divorced!" cried Mrs. Mark Stanton shrilly. "I

will be divorced! I wouldn't put up with it a day longer if Mark went down on his bended knees. I hate him, and what's more I hate you. Standing there talking about his mothers and his Susans while I'm so miserable!" She burst into a passion of tears. "I hate you! I hate him! I hate everybody!" At this interesting moment a sound of cheerful whistling made itself heard. "Oh, botheration! There he is! If you tell him I've been crying, I'll kill you!"

Before he knew what was happening, Mrs. Mark Stanton kicked the little gilt footstool to the other side of the hearthrug, and, mulminating fury and blue chiffon embroidered with crystals, dashed through the pink satin curtains and disappeared into the next

room.

"Dear me!" said Lord Burchington, rumpling up his crisp gray curls with both hands and surveying himself in the Louis XIV. mirror with infinite satisfaction. "Dear me!"

There was a pause; then the handle of the door was jerked sharply, the door was kicked open, and Mr. Mark Stanton came in.

. "Hello, Doddy, old man," said that gentleman genially. He stopped short and looked around, and his voice changed. "Where's Betty?"

Lord Burchington regarded him with a reproachful astonishment most pleasing to behold. "My dear chap, how

should I know?"

"I thought I heard her talking." The young man tiptoed softly to the pink satin curtains and listened intently. There came the sound as of one banging a door afar off. "Ah, she's in there." Mr. Mark Stanton raised himself up from his stooping position, and returned to the hearthrug with an uplifted air.

Lord Burchington surveyed him with mild curiosity. "Where did you ex-

pect her to be?"

Mr. Mark Stanton viciously kicked

the unoffending coals—which were the exclusive property of Mrs. Mark Stanton—with the point of his immaculate patent-leather shoe.

"You never know with a woman like Betty where she is or what she's up to. I was afraid——" He bit his lip.

"I mean I hoped she was gone."

"Gone?" The blankness of expression that accompanied the exclamation would have done credit to a cabinet minister interviewing a suffragette. "Gone?"

Mr. Mark Stanton nodded. "Yes. It's come at last, old man."

"What's come at last?"

"The end."
"What end?"

"The end between Betty and me."

"You're going to separate?"

"No," replied Mr. Mark Stanton solemnly, as if announcing the day of judgment, "we're going to be divorced." With true dramatic instinct, he crossed the hearthrug and dropped into his wife's pet pink satin chair.

"You're not!"

"We are."
"Honest Injun?"

"Honest Injun."

"You don't mean to say so!" Overcome with enthusiasm, Lord Burchington dashed across the hearthrug and held out his hand. "Congratulations, dear old man!"

You should have seen Mr. Mark Stanton's face! "What?"

His friend seized the limp hand and wrung it joyously. "My dear chap, I am glad!"

"I don't see why you should be so pleased," returned the young man, sur-

lily disengaging his hand.

"It isn't often I bring off a bet," said Lord Burchington joyously, "but I've done it for once in my life."

"What are you talking about?"

"My bet with Frank—a hundred to one in quidlets that you two wouldn't last out the season. You see I was right." He poked Mr. Mark Stanton playfully in the ribs and slapped his leg with delight.

"Rather a strange bet for a friend to make, don't you think?" said that gen-

tleman coldly.

"My dear chap," cried the other enthusiastically, "it wasn't only me, but every other fellah in the room took him on. He must stand to lose between six and seven hundred. My Lord! Won't old Frankie be pleased!"

"Pleased to lose six hundred

pounds?"

"My dear old chap, what's six hundred matter to Frankie? He only backed himself to lose in the hope that it'd bring him luck."

"Bring him luck?" repeated Mr.

Mark Stanton, rising to his feet.

"What ho!" A vivacious hand shot out and dug him in the ribs again. "Dear old boy, don't you see? Now you'll be out of the way, he'll get a chance at a look-in."

Mr. Mark Stanton's handsome countenance appeared to change into stone. "Do you mean a look-in with Betty?"

"What else do you suppose I mean?"
"Do you mean he's in love with her?"

"My dear chap, he proposed to her half a dozen times to my own knowledge before she married you."

There was nothing stony about Mr. Mark Stanton then. "If I catch that damned cad talking to my wife," he said furiously, "I'll wring his beastly neck!"

It would have done your heart good to have heard the joyous cackling that rang through the room. "But he won't be talking to your wife, dear old boy. She won't be your wife any longer after six months."

"Well, she won't be his wife, I can

tell vou!"

\* "Well, if she isn't his, she'll be somebody else's. You can bet your bottom dollar on that."

"Catch her!" returned Mr. Mark

Stanton, furiously pulling dcwn his white peau de suède waistcoat, which fitted him like wax.

"No, dear old boy. It'll be she who'll catch them."

"Betty will never look at another man." The manly voice rose to something like a roar, so profound was its conviction.

"Oh, oh! Ah, ah! That's good! That's quite good!" With a movement full of dexterity, Lord Burchington slipped past his friend, and, in his turn, sat down in Mrs. Mark Stanton's pink satin chair.

His host looked at him with a frosty blue eye. "I fail to see the joke."

"But you will," chuckled Lord Burchington gayly. "You'll see it right enough, dear old boy. Just you wait! She'll have the time of her life, dear little Betty!"

"She'll go to her mother's," replied Mr. Mark Stanton, "and stay there."

"Twice." The derision enthroned against the pink satin cushions was painful to behold. "You see the men leaving a beautiful woman like Betty alone, don't you?" The jeering voice suddenly changed to tones of the most dulcet persuasion. "She is a beautiful woman, isn't she?"

Mr. Mark Stanton kicked the little gilt footstool, like his wife before him. "I never said she wasn't," he remarked sullenly.

"And so graceful! And such a lovely figure! She has a lovely figure, hasn't she?"

"I never said she hadn't."

Lord Burchington put out his hand and picked up from the table beside him a photograph enshrined in a gold frame incrusted with turquoise. "And such a sweet, lovable, gracious, charming woman!" He regarded the presentment of Mrs. Mark Stanton—in a dress like a sack, with a tail like a fish, three plumes standing upright on her head, and about a ton of diamonds upon

her—with a face as guileless as a child of two. "She is a sweet, lovable, gracious, charming woman, isn't she?"

Mr. Mark Stanton turned his handsome head in the other direction. "I never said she wasn't."

"And yet you're not satisfied!" He returned the picture to its place and looked up, beaming radiantly. "I say, won't her mother be pleased?"

"Damn her mother!" said Mr. Mark Stanton. He picked up the poker and banged down the fire, which didn't need any banging. Then he picked up the coal box and emptied it onto the fire, which didn't need any coals. Finally, he dropped the coal box onto the floor with a thump.

Mrs. Mark Stanton, whose meditations on divorce the thump had apparently disturbed, appeared between the pink satin curtains, where she remained, grasping them in her two hands, with both her arms extended after the manner of the divine Sarah, overcome with arsenic or murder, about to go to heaven.

"What on earth are you doing? What was that horrible noise?"

"Sorry. I let the coal box fall. My coal box," remarked her lord, lifting up the brass receptacle and smacking it down by the side of the fire. "Also the coals." He seized the shovel and groveled about retrieving pieces of the best sparkling Wallsend, warranted to give out a good heat, without dust, in a gentleman's grate. "Your coals."

Lord Burchington heaved himself up out of the pink satin chair.

"Hello! Begun dividing things up already? I say, what a ripping idea!"

Mrs. Mark Stanton let go of the curtains as if they had burned her, and advanced to the hearthrug.

"We haven't begun dividing up anything." Her voice, ordinarily sweet and low, rapidly rose to something perilously resembling a scream. "All the things in this room are mine. Are—"

"Shut up!" said her husband.

The door opened silently, and the butler, who had buttled in the highest circles of society, glided in.

Instantly the three faces on the hearthrug were wreathed in joyous

smiles.

"Yes, as I was saying—" they began, in a unison so perfect that they might have been years on the musichall stage. They glared at each other, and stopped short.

The butler gently insinuated the silver tray with the Sèvres coffee cups a few yards farther into the room.

"Extraordinary weather for the end of June—" The three affable voices, overcome by the coincidence, stopped again. In the silence that followed, the plaintive tones of the archepiscopal Edwards were heard.

"Shall I serve coffee, madam?"

"No, put it down."

"Very good, madam." His back breathing an archepiscopal protest that they should be such blithering idiots as to try to deceive *him*, he placed the tray upon a table adjacent to his employers and withdrew.

The three pairs of eyes surveyed the glittering array with the superior indifference of those who have already eaten more than is good for them, and have not the slightest inclination to drink.

"I suppose nobody wants coffee?" said Mrs. Mark Stanton ungraciously.

Instantly Lord Burchington advanced with an outstretched hand. "I do, don't you, Mark?"

"Of course I want coffee."

"Of course he wants coffee," reechoed the friend of the family. "Pray, why shouldn't we want coffee?"

"Have it, then!" snapped Mrs. Mark Stanton. She flounced to the table, seized the coffeepot, and began to pour it out.

Burchington followed her to the tray.
"I'll drink yours, too, if you don't want it."

"Greedy pig!" said Mrs. Mark Stanton. Her gray eyes flashing scorn unspeakable at his gluttony, she filled his cup to the brim, and handed it to him.

Impressed, but bearing up, he received it, and, lifting it in a plebeian way to his aristocratic nose, sniffed at

it delightedly.

"Delicious!" With evident pleasure in the steadiness of his hand, he sipped it without spilling a drop. "I always say nobody ever has coffee like yours." He moved to the hearthrug, and stood with his back to the fire, his shrewd eyes watching the pair of them intently the while.

Beautiful Betty Stanton filled the second cup, and stood holding it out at arm's length in the direction of her husband, who, staring moodily upward, took no notice of it.

"Well, can't you take it?"

With an effort painful to witness, her husband detached his gaze from his devout contemplation of his own ceiling, which he had apparently never observed before, and brought his eyes to bear on the exquisite face of his wife, who looked at him as if she'd never seen him before.

"Sorry. Thanks." He took the cup, also at arm's length, turned his back on her, and sat down beside the fire.

"Well," said Lord Burchington, affably making conversation, "I suppose this is the last time you'll be pouring out coffee for us, eh, Betty?"

Mrs. Mark Stanton, busily engaged in filling her own cup, looked up as if she'd been shot. "Why, pray?"

"You won't be here after to-morrow,

will you?"

"No, thank Heaven, I shan't!" She flung a look of passionate thanksgiving at the ceiling, the nearest representative to heaven on hand, and, seizing her coffee cup, smartly disposed herself in her own particular chair.

The pleasing spectacle thereupon presented itself of husband and wife, on either side of the domestic hearth, glaring at each other like Kilkenny cats, while their friend stood in the middle of the hearthrug absorbed in friendship and gluttony, and apparently finding gluttony the more sustaining emotion of the two. He lifted his cup and nodded toward each in turn.

"Here's to you both, my dears. Good

luck!"

"Good luck!" repeated Mr. Mark Stanton scoffingly, "Good God!"

Lord Burchington beamed at them over his cup. "Funny old world, what? Nobody satisfied. Here you two have got all this, and don't want it, and here am I, a poor lonely devil, who's got nothing worth having, who'd give my head to have what you don't want."

You should have seen Mr. Mark Stanton looking around the room!

"Great Scott! What do you want this for?"

"It's my idea of happiness—pretty room, a pretty woman, lights, flowers, fire, a cup of coffee—home." He paused artistically. "I suppose, when you come down to the bottom of things, that's what we really all of us want—a home."

The golden head reclining against the pink satin cushions went up as if it had been suddenly pricked. "I don't want a home, thank you kindly."

"Nor I," responded her husband. "A

home's a beastly bore."

"Of course it's a beastly bore," said Burchington cheerfully. "What isn't? Aren't hotels a beastly bore? Aren't apartments a beastly bore? Aren't clubs a beastly bore? Aren't restaurants a beastly bore? Aren't servants, children, cats, dogs, motors, meals, a beastly bore? Isn't being born, marrying, living, dying, a beastly bore? Everything's a beastly bore. But home"—again he paused and his voice dropped to a softer key—"home's different. We hate it, we despise it, but we come back to it. It's our little bit of the universe

that we've made for ourselves. Our hopes, joys, fears, all belong to it. All our great events, all our little silly happenings, all that makes a woman a woman and a man a man, go to make up that beastly bore that everybody hates and everybody loves—a home."

"Pity you've never tried one, dear old boy," remarked Mr. Mark Stanton sar-

donically.

"Pity I haven't." A spasm of something perilously like emotion crossed the bland, clean-shaven face. "I'd the chance once and I didn't take it. I wish to God I had!" He stopped short as if ashamed of his own betrayal of feeling and held out his empty cup. "More coffee, please."

His hostess, whose face was very flushed and whose eyes had about as much feeling in them as glass marbles, snatched the cup out of his hand and went to the tray. Standing beside her, the genial Burchington cast a predatory eye about the beautiful room.

"You've not begun to divide up your possessions yet, what? I say, what a

business it'll be!"

"It won't be any business at all," snapped the master of the house. "Betty can have the lot."

"Thanks," his wife snapped back at him. "You can have the lot yourself. I don't want the beastly things!" She shoved the coffee cup at her guest and flung herself back into her chair.

"Beastly things, eh?" said Burchington, looking at the exquisite cup in his hand. "Whose beastly things are these?"

"Betty's."

"No, they're not-they're Mark's."

"A wedding present to both of you, eh?" said the smooth voice. "For beastly things, they're rather lovely. Seems a pity to divide the set."

"I tell you we're not going to divide anything." For such an indifferent person, Mr. Mark Stanton raised his voice uncommonly loud. "If Betty don't want 'em, we'll sell the whole damn' lot!"

"Good man! Good man!" cried Lord Burchington. "I love sales. Other people's things are always so much nicer than one's own. I know somebody who'll snap up that writing table of yours, Betty."

Again the golden head went up as if the pink satin cushion had held a

hidden hairpin. "Who?"

"Susan," replied Lord Burchington cheerfully. "She's always had her eye on that writing table of yours."

"Well, then she's not going to have it," screamed Mrs. Mark Stanton. "I'm

not going to sell that table."

Lord Burchington's shrewd eye, darting hither and thither, lighted on the beautiful old praying carpet just by the side of the door.

"And that old Persian rug of yours, Mark—old Frank'll be down on that rug like a knife. Dear old Frank! He always wanted that rug."

"Well, dear old Frank's not going to get it," replied Mr. Mark Stanton surlily. "I'm not going to sell that rug."

"You must let. me pick out one or two things before the dealers come in. That chair, for instance." Lord Burchington took the little gold, filigree spoon out of his saucer, and waggled it in the direction of the chair. "I'd like to have that chair."

His hostess turned her golden head sharply and looked over her shoulder

down the room.

"Why, that's the chair you gave us!"
You should have seen Lord Burchington's astonishment! "Is it? Bless my soul, so it is! Ah, then I must have it! Just to remind me how pleased you both were when you got it. Do you remember the day it came home?"

"I remember," said Mr. Mark Stan-

ton shortly.

The fierce light died out of his wife's gray eyes. "It was our first wedding present," she said softly.

"They brought it here and unpacked it," said Lord Burchington. "There were no carpets and no curtains and no fire and no lights, and they stood it down there in the middle of the great bare floor."

"And Mark said it was his."
"And Betty said it was hers."

"And then you both sat down in it together because you said it belonged to you both, and Betty said: 'Now our home's begun!'" The soft, sympathetic voice changed to the prosaic tones of a thoroughly good business man. "I gave thirty-five pounds for that chair. I'll give you fifteen pounds to secure it, cash down."

"Thanks," said Mr. Mark Stanton stiffly. "I'm not going to sell that chair. I'm going to keep it."

"No, you're not!" snapped his wife.

"I am!"

"It's my chair as much as it's yours."
"And it's mine as much as it's yours."

"You'll have to cut it in half," interposed Lord Burchington genially. "It belongs equally to you both."

"I don't want the damn' chair!" Mr. Mark Stanton pulled his long legs together, got up, and, marching over to the silver tray, smacked his cup down on it. "This coffee's simply vile!"

His friend, watching him out of the corner of his eye, sipped his with the greatest enjoyment. "I wonder who'll take the flat. I say, it might suit the Erskines. Why don't you ring them up?"

"What?" said Mrs. Mark Stanton shrilly. "Let my beautiful flat to the Erskines? Why, the place'd be ruined!"

Lord Burchington drained his cup to the dregs. "What'll that matter to you? You won't be here to see it."

"How do you know I shan't be here?"

"My dear Betty, how can you be here? You'll both have to go abroad until this has all blown over, and lie low." "Lie low!" The beautiful face looking up at him went as white as death.

Mr. Mark Stanton whipped around as if he'd been struck. "Why the devil should Betty lie low? She's done nothing she's ashamed of."

"Of course she hasn't, but you know what people are, my dear friends. You know what the world is! A woman who has divorced her husband——" Again his voice changed to a tone of eager inquiry. "By the way, what story are you going to tell?"

"Story about what?" asked Mr. Mark Stanton, his handsome eyes glaring.

"To enable you to get this divorce."

Mr. Mark Stanton thrust his hands into his trousers pockets. "We're not going to tell any story."

"We're going to tell the truth," said his wife shrilly.

Lord Burchington beamed at them both. "Then you won't get your divorce."

"Why not?" cried the pair of them together.

"There'd be precious few divorces if people told only the truth. You can't go to the judge and say: 'Please, my lord, we're sick of playing this game; we'd like to play at something else!' That won't get you a divorce, you know."

"We can say we hate each other," suggested Mrs. Mark Stanton eagerly.

"You can hate each other as much as you please, my dear child. The law doesn't recognize love and hate; it only recognizes right and wrong. Don't you make any mistake! George Washington's little ax won't cut down this cherry tree. You'll have to tell a lie, and a good old thumping lie at that. Somebody's got to bear the blame, you know. In this case, of course, it'll have to be Mark."

"Of course," said Mr. Mark Stanton, snapping the words out of his mouth.

Mrs. Mark Stanton sat bolt upright.

"Why Mark more than I? I'm quite willing to take my share of the blame."

"Yes," said Lord Burchington smoothly, "but not of the consequences. Even so, I don't see how you're going to manage it. He hasn't deserted you, has he?"

"Oh, don't be so silly!" said Betty

"And he hasn't banged you about."

Mr. Mark Stanton turned on him. "Oh, don't be such an ass!"

"And he hasn't gone off with another woman!"

"If you're going to talk like that, Doddy," remarked Mrs. Mark Stanton, with her nose in the air, "I shall leave the room."

"You won't be able to leave the court, my dear. You may as well get used to it. That's how everybody's going to talk to you—the judge and the counsel and the lawyers and the papers. You'll like reading about yourself in the papers, won't you? 'Mrs. Mark Stanton, in a pink bonnet with a green feather, gave evidence—.'"

"Dash it all, Burchington!" interrupted Mr. Mark Stanton furiously. "There's no need for you to be vulgar!"

"Me vulgar!" cried Lord Burchington, with virtuous indignation. "I'm not vulgar. It's you who are vulgar!" "What?" cried Betty and Mark together.

"Well, don't you call it vulgar to drag a decent, honorable name into the gutter? To take your private lives into the streets and hold them up for everybody to stare at? To have your servants creeping and your detectives spying and your witnesses lying and your friends sniggering? Don't you call it vulgar to go back on your own bargain because it doesn't turn out quite as good as you thought it would? To handicap an innocent child that you brought into the world simply to please yourselves? To dishonor your own promises that nobody asked you to

make? To break the vows that you made of your own free will to Almighty God? Great Scott! If divorce isn't vulgar, I'd like to know what is!"

"It's better to be vulgar than miserable," said Mr. Mark Stanton sullenly.

"Miserable!" cried Lord Burchington, and his voice was scathing. "Miserable, because Betty sits out a dance more or less with one man or another, or Mark refuses to pay ten guineas for a hat that isn't worth ten bob?"

At that Mrs. Mark Stanton, who was nearly crying, picked up her spirit again. "Well, if that isn't misery, I should like

to know what is."

"Then go to the homes where the men can't get work and the children are crying for bread. Go to the hospitals where men and women lie in mortal agony. Go to the prisons where the poor devils who haven't had a chance are condemned to a living death. Go to the deaf, the dumb, the blind, and then come back and tell me you're miserable." He paused weightily. "You know no more what misery means than you know the meaning of love."

Once again Mrs. Mark Stanton went scarlet with indignation. "How do you know we don't know what love means?"

"If you did, you wouldn't desecrate

"Oh, damn love!" said Mr. Mark

"Damn love, by all means," retorted Lord Burchington affably. "But you can't do without it. It's the thing we're all looking for, from the king on his throne down to the beggar in the street in her rags. It's the beast that devours us, the flame that cleanses us, the devil that destroys us; but it's the God in us that saves us all."

"You seem to do pretty well without it," observed Mr. Mark Stanton

grimly.

"It's because I do so badly without it that I want to save you from making the same mistake. Do you suppose I find it very gay up in that great barn of mine upstairs? Chairs and tables don't fill a man's life, my dear friends, any more than good dinners feed his heart." He put his cup on the mantelpiece behind him, and rubbed his hands genially. "By the way, what are you going to do about Jimmy?"

You should have seen Mrs. Mark

Stanton jump! "Jimmy?"

"You can't chop him in two, you know. Jimmy's not a chair. What are you going to do with the boy?"

"God knows, not I!" said his father

miserably.

"I shall have him, of course," said his mother. "Mark would never take Jimmy from me."

"And pray," asked Lord Burchington, "what right have you to take Jimmy

from Mark?"

"I'm his mother."

"Mark's his father. Jimmy needs him quite as much as he needs you."

Mrs. Mark Stanton began to tremble. "Oh, be quiet, Doddy! We can settle about Jimmy after."

"No, you can't. It won't be you who'll settle about your own child, but the judge. He'll chop him in two right enough. Six months with the one, six months with t'other. Just nice time to learn to hate you both. Poor old Jimmy! Seeing he's done nothing, it seems a bit rough on him, poor kid!"

"Oh, don't," cried Jimmy's mother, suddenly breaking down. She drew the pink satin cushion sharply toward her,

and hid her face in it.

"It's easy for you to jaw about other people," cried her husband furiously. "We've got to think of ourselves."

"Well, think of yourselves!" retorted Burchington, with sudden passion. "What are you going to do with your own lives? If you stay single, what sort of life's that for a young man and woman of your age. If you marry again, what proof have you that it'll turn out better than this?"

Mr. Mark Stanton glared at his friend. "We shan't marry again."

"Oh, yes, you will. Divorced people always marry. But don't ask me to the wedding. I shan't be your best man a second time. I'd quite enough of the first." He began to chuckle reminiscently. "I say, do you remember when you couldn't find the ring, and Betty couldn't get her glove off, and old Fido ate so much cake he was sick on Mother Newman's pink satin lap?" He laughed uproariously.

"Oh, shut up!" yelled Mr. Mark

Stanton.

The gay voice fell almost to a whis-"And do you remember little Betty coming down the aisle, with her bridesmaids looking like angels, their white veils floating behind them, making all of us feel like sweeps?" He dug the elegant figure beside him in the ribs with his elbow. "I know Mark felt like a sweep-didn't you, old boy? And the sun shining and the birds singing and the bells ringing and the children running after you pelting you with flowers-" He stopped short and looked from one to the other. didn't hate each other then, did you?" "My God!" said Mark Stanton, put-

ting his elbows on the mantelpiece and hiding his face in his hands. "And then the home-coming. Do you

remember, you came back at eleven o'clock at night, a day before you were expected? There were no servants and no dinner, and I came down, and we foraged in the larder, and Betty made the coffee, and Mark fried the bacon and eggs, and I laid the table. didn't find home such a beastly bore that night, did you?"

He laid one hand on Mark's shoulder and held out his other to Betty, who snatched at it and hid her face on it. "Oh, you two foolish, foolish children! You've got the best thing in the world. Don't let the world take it from you. It'd like to, but don't you let it. Hold fast to it, clutch at it. It isn't easy to keep, but you stick to it. Don't drag the most beautiful things in the world into the gutter." He drew them together with a tenderly compelling hand. "Have another try, my dears."

Mrs. Mark Stanton began to cry as if

her heart would break.

At the sound of her wild sobbing, her husband looked at her, and his handsome, haggard young face went white to the lips.

"Betty!" he cried.

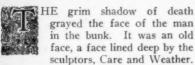
"Oh, Mark! Mark! Mark!" Mrs. Stanton slid across the white bearskin and flung herself headlong into her husband's outstretched arms.

In the silence that ensued, Lord Burchington tiptoed gently toward the pink satin curtains, and, having accomplished what he had ser himself to do, discreetly disappeared.





# WILLIAM SLAVENS MENUTT



It was a kindly, patient face, with the expression of beseechment, of a longing for expression denied by the limitations of nature, common to intelligent dogs, dumb poets—and old prospectors. The gray-haired man in the bunk was an old prospector, and the wings of his weary soul were fluttering for freedom from the racked and wornout, wounded body—like to a butterfly struggling in the encumbering chrysalis—eager to be gone on the last stampede over the mysterious, unknown, yet all-traveled trail of space to the Eldorado of the Great Bevond.

And while he lay thus on the far frontier of his earthly experience, the aged Argonaut mumbled a desperate prayer for yet a little mortal lease for the life that was fast breaking from the weakening grasp of his flesh. He prayed thus not for his own life's sake, but with the welfare of dear ones he was leaving torturing his mind and adding anxiety for them to the ravages of death.

In the brief glimpse he had of the two men who entered the hut before one of the fast-recurring periods of delirium claimed him, he took them for angels sent in answer to his petition, though beings farther in appearance from the conventional conception of the winged messengers from Over There could scarcely be imagined.

Both were rough-clad, heavy-booted, bearded, and weather-stained, and each bore an unsightly pack on his bent back. One was a blond giant and the other a sad-eyed, scrawny, undersized, though wire-tough, caricature of mankind with thin, mouse-colored hair and a prominent Adam's apple well displayed on a ludicrously long neck. The blond giant was Bill Heenan and the little man his partner, Tin Can Harris.

Heenan, easing himself out of his pack straps, was the first to sight the form on the bunk. He let the pack fall with a thump and knelt by the side of the death-stricken man, muttering profane surprise.

"Old Shep Williams," he informed Harris. "Ar.' he's about through, from the looks of him. Shep! Shep, wake up! Can yuh hear me, Shep?"

He threw back the woven blanket that covered the still form, and his probing fingers came away from the rumpled blue shirt that lay over the heaving breast ominously stained with dark red. Heenan swore and tenderly peeled the shirt from the flesh. A small, dark spot ringed with blue, on the right side two inches under the breast, showed where a bullet had entered.

"Shot!" Heenan growled. "Plain,

cold murder, Tin Can. No gun here, an' old Shep would never—— Dig that pint out o' my pack. Hustle! I want to know who did this before he goes. Hustle it, Tin Can! He's pretty weak."

He forced open the clenched teeth, and let the strong liquor trickle down the injured man's throat. Williams groaned, shuddered, the color came faintly back to his pallid, sunken cheeks, and he slowly opened his fast-glazing eyes.

"It's Heenan, Shep," Bill said tenderly, leaning close. "Heenan. Do

you know me?"

Recognition came into the dim eyes, and the old man uttered an incoherent ejaculation of joy.

"Just—in time—Bill," he said faintly. "Good old Bill! My coat—underneath

me—feel——"

"Who shot you?" Heenan interrupted him.

Williams shook his head. "Only—saw one. Chinaman or—Jap. Stole my samples. I—I got away. The—they shot me. They were—across river. Only saw—Jap—or Chinaman. Bill, I struck it. I—I struck it, old—boy. Quartz—free milling. Richest thing—yet, Bill. Rich. Average two hundred—ton. Ten foot—vein, Bill. Right where railroad's going—through. I—struck it, Bill. My coat—under me, Bill—the map—the map—"

He closed his eyes and relaxed, breathing heavily. Heenan applied the whisky once more, and Williams revived, strangling and weaker than be-

tore.

"They—after map," he continued.
"In my—coat. Bill, my wife—Seattle
— You know Andy Jacobs?"

"Guy that had the Elite in Dawson? Sure I know him."

"In—Seattle. He grubstaked—me, Bill. He'll—tote fair. Take—map to him, Bill. My pardner. He'll—look out for—my wife, an'——"

"But when were you shot, Shep?

Tell me when an' where. If there's a chance to get the birds that—"

"No, no, Bill. No. Don't risk—it. Please, Bill! My wife— Read letter I got three months ago—before left—Kinchutna. No—money. Wife an'—girl—no money. Find 'em—1428 Forty-fifth Street, Bill. Take map—to Jacobs'—office—Second Avenue—"

"I know. I'll get it there, Shep. My word on that, an' you know my word's good. Tin Can's here with me, an' we'll pike right to the coast, an' I'll go 'below' with it myself. Don't worry about that part of it. I'll get it to Jacobs, Shep, do you hear? I give you my word that I'll get it there. An' if your wife needs anythin'—"

"No. Jacobs—my pardner—grubstaked me. He rich now. He'll—tote fair. He'll give—her my—share. Good

old-Bill! I'm-ready now."

Heenan held the flask to his lips once more, and he relaxed with a sigh, closing his eyes.

"My coat—Bill," he muttered, after a little. "Picture—my wife an'—kid. Let me——"

"Sure."

Heenan carefully lifted the racked form and drew an old battered coat from underneath it. Searching through the pockets, he found a squill of paper rolled in oil silk that he knew for the map, and a leather case four inches long by three wide, carefully wrapped in the same material. He stripped off the silk, snapped open the case, and looked on the picture of a middle-aged woman, with a sweet, tired face, holding a curly-haired, dimpled three-year-old girl on her knee. He held the picture up before the faded old blue eyes, and they lightened with pleasure.

"Struck it—at last, Bill," he whispered. "Knew I would. She'll have plenty now. Rich. Take—take——"

The eyelids dropped, lifted slightly with a great effort, dropped again, and the head lolled limp. Old Shep Wil-

liams' eyes had looked for the last time on the picture of the wife and child he loved so dearly. Heenan tenderly laid the blanket over the dead face.

"There's another one of us gone," he mused. "They're thinnin' fast, the old-

timers."

"He's luckier'n most," Tin Can said.
"Gettin' married poor at his time o' life,
an' then leavin' enough to keep his wife
an' kid from starvin'."

Heenan nodded. "Shep was crazy over that wife o' his. An' the kid! Say, winter an' summer come an' went for him when that kid smiled or cried. It must get to a man pretty hard to live alone like Shep done all his days, an' then grab him some fine wife like his

an' a cunnin' little kid."

"M-m-m, mebbe," Tin Can ad-"I'm right glad, mitted dubiously. though, Bill, that I ain't never got cemented permanent onto no wife nor kid nor none o' them kind o' clutterin' things. Me-when my feet get itchin', I want leave to scratch 'em hard an' often, without usin' the same ground twice, an' you know how detainin' a wife is, Bill. A wife to a man with itchy feet like mine is all the same as a hobble to a hungry young horse with hell in his heels an' the smell o' sweet grass twenty mile over the range comin' down the wind to you. Some women is handy to wash clothes, but I'd as lief buy new when mine get dirty, an' then look at the chink laundries sproutin' in every camp. Uh-uh! Not for me! A marriage license looks just the same to me as a black card in a hand o' four diamonds after I've moved with the whole roll for the chance to draw an' make sure I'm a fool."

"Ever try married life?" Heenan in-

quired.

"Sure," Tin Can admitted largely. "If success come from tryin' an' tryin' again after yuh fall down the first time, same as they say, I'd be the successfulest married man in the Territory. I've

tried it an' I've gone for the bank roll to fill a four flush, too. Neither play ever got me nothin'."

There was a peculiar expression on Heenan's face as he looked down at the still, blanketed form on the bunk.

"I never was-hitched," he said,

rather hesitantly.

Tin Can shook his head mournfully. "You always was luckier'n me," he sighed enviously. "It's the original brace game. If yuh win, yuh lose, an' if yuh lose, yuh don't learn nothin'. The happier yuh are, the worse yuh feel, an' the less yuh like 'em, the harder they are to shake. I had one I sure 'nough liked once-liked her so's I'd rather have my feet itch than scratch 'em good on a long trail-an' wha'd she do? I tell vuh what she done: She up an' run off with a four-eyed, sliverlegged lunger from Noo Hampshire, an' left me with my six-gun plumb full o' unspent bullets, that's what she done. She couldn't stray out with a homemade man that I could step out o' the door an' swap lead with, win or lose, but vamoosed with a lunger.

"I put on my war paint, an' got Arizona all dusty trampin' round where I thought they was—an' they wasn't—an' when I find her in Tucson, she's dividin' her time between spendin' his life insurance on society that was too high for me to fly in, an' waterin' the flowers on his grave. When I play meek an' tell her I'll take her back in spite of her sinnin' ways, she tells me her soul mate lies under the sod, an' she'll never take another. She tells me our marriage wasn't no soul union. What's a soul union, Bill?"

"I dunno."

"Neither do I. It's some kind o' Mormon stuff, I think. Anyhow, our marriage wasn't it, she says, an' she was goin' to live to do good. While I was debatin' whether to get sad an'-commit suicide, or get mad an' use my gun both ways, some more soul mate inside a Jew

drummer's suit o' clothes nit town, an' she done him good with what was left o' the lunger's insurance. Then I see it was time to 'assert my rights, so I done got a divorce. Ever hear Gertie Williams, in Dawson them first days, sing 'The Path o' the Wayward'?"

Heenan shook his head.

"That song's the bunk!" Tin Can declared bitterly. "It tells all about a woman that left her man like that, an' how she had a hell of a time an' died poor, an' how that's the way it always turns out. I used to think how mine was havin' her troubles like that, an' feel sorry for the pore, weak woman, an' then you know what? I'm down in Frisco, an' a million dollars' worth o' woman gits out of a big automobile with a fat man that looks like he's goin' to look the city over an' buy it to stay in overnight if it suits him. It's my pore, deluded wife an' the Jew drummer she'd married. She staked him with the lunger's insurance, an' now he's a department-store king, an' ordinary millionaires look at him when he goes by an' say: 'Gee! Don't I wish I was rich like him!' 'Path o' the Wayward!' Don't tell me!"

"So that soured you on the game, huh?"

Tin Can sighed. "I told yuh yuh didn't learn nothin' if yuh lost. I pick me out a Swede so ugly that I figure she can't find no playmate to run away with, even if she does get wandersome. I figure, you see, on copperin' my first bet."

"And did she beat it, too?"

"No! I overplay my hand, though. I pick her so ugly that I couldn't last myself. You've see a bloodhound foller a scent? A bloodhound trailin' a limburger cheese across a billiard table'd been all lost compared to that woman follerin' me. If I'd been the north pole, she'd beat 'em all there. I make a lucky scratch at faro one night, an' clean fifteen thousand dollars. I give her all of

it but what it took to buy her a ticket to Sweden an' made her promise never to come back. That's eight year ago, an' I've been afraid to turn around sudden ever since, for fear I'd see her. It's the bunk, I'm tellin' yuh! Look at poor Shep, there. He didn't have a mite o' peace in his dyin', worried like he was about his wife an' kid."

Heenan was staring at the still form on the bunk, and there was envy in his eyes, envy for the old man who had died with a wife and child to worry about. Instincts long apathetic stirred in him disquietingly. He recalled the look of love and pride and ownership in the glazing eyes that had looked dimly at the picture of the woman and the little girl, and sighed.

"I never had one," he said very softly.

"No chance o' packin' him out from here. See if you can find a pick an' shovel, an' we'll put him away."

The tiny log cabin was an old one, built on a small level space notched in the steep hillside, several hundreds of vards above the brawling mountain river. There were signs that indicated an effort on the part of the trapper or prospector who had hewn and placed its logs to make a small clearing about it, but the verdant vegetation had long since conquered what little encroachment he had made on the wilderness, and the cabin was almost entirely hidden by devil's club and alder. At the rear of the shack. Tin Can discovered a pick with a broken handle and a bent and rusty shovel, and Heenan located a small hollow where the earth was deep enough to allow a shallow grave. Working by turns, they dug the rude trench, and laid the body tenderly therein.

"Can you-pray?" Tin Can inquired, abashed.

Heenan shook his head. "Naw. All I remember o' my prayin' days is 'Now I lay me down to sleep.' They's more to it, but I forget. It's part o' one my maw taught me."

Tin Can leaned on the old shovel handle and beamed.

. "Is that a fact? I wonder, now, could my maw an' yours been friends? I'd done forgot it, but I mind now my old lady taught me one that begun that way. 'Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray—I pray—' Aw, hell! I ain't got no memory for them things. If we could just recollect it all, we could say it for Shep, huh?"

Heenan nodded absently. He drew the picture of the wife and child from his pocket, and fingered it gingerly. His face flamed red with embarrassment.

"I-I'll-say one," he muttered, with

averted eyes.

He knelt and closed one of the dead man's hands over the picture and lifted his big face to the cloud-flecked sky.

"Give—Shep a—a lift," he blurted.
"An'—if yuh see him, tell him I—I'll get that map to Jacobs, or—or bust.

He-- I-- Amen!"

He wrapped the blanket around the still form, rose hastily, and, seizing the shovel, began filling in the rude grave energetically. Tin Can rolled a cigarette, sipped a thin stream of smoke, and blew it thoughtfully from his pursed lips.

"That didn't sound very prayerish to me," he criticized mildly. "The tail end was all right—yuh played that 'amen' strong. But the heft of it was too much like a man bawlin' the cook

for another plate o' 'jacks.' "

"I didn't hear yuh helpin' out none,"

Heenan retorted hotly.

"I pray like a parson plays poker,"
Tin Can admitted. "All I meant was
that yuh talked too easy an' nateral for
a real player; too much like yuh was
—was sure 'nough talkin' to somebody."

Heenan wiped the sweat from his brow and sighed. "Mebbe I was," he mused. "I dunno. If I was, I reckon my talk was all right. I never meet nobody yet I was ashamed to say 'howdy' to, an' I don't aim to before I

pass out—or after. I don't hold with some o' these furriners o' kowtowin' to the boss after you've done a fair day's work. Not me. I've played my game as I see it, an' if they is any Big Boss—anywheres—I don't reckon I'll have to learn no new language to talk to Him."

Tin Can shook his head doubtfully. "It ain't good prayin'," he insisted. "It's

too easy to understand."

They piled big rocks over the leveled grave, and departed for their packs.

"We'll hike over the ridge an' get some Indians to take us across the straits to Satka," Heenan planned. "I can get the steamer there for Seattle, an' it's shorter'n goin' back to our own boat the way we come."

"An' all our prospectin' plans gone

swoosh!" Tin Can grumbled.

"Stay an' prospect, then, an' be damned to yuh!" Heenan flared at him.

Tin Can shook his head and sighed as he eased himself into the pack strap. "Nope. Yuh might go astray with that map, an' then I'd always have that on my mind. I'll trail along with yuh."

"What yuh growlin' about, then?"
"Can't a man growl 'thout your always gettin' sore?" Tin Can demanded
aggrievedly. "Anybody'd think I meant
what I say the way you take it. Body
can't have no peace, the way you pester.
Let's get goin'."

They reached the southern coast of the island after five days of heartbreaking toil over the ridge, and engaged a Siwash crew to take them across the straits and twenty miles down the coast of Nakagoff to Satka. Arrived at the town, Heenan at once sought news of the steamer.

"The Carelton left yesterday," a storekeeper informed him. "No more due until the Whetmore Tuesday."

Tuesday was four days hence. Heenan went grumbling into the street and took a disgusted, visual inventory of

what the aged island town had to offer in the way of amusement to make the time pass easily. On the surface it promised little. All the stores and saloons fronted on one planked street, which ran parallel with the line of the beach. Back of this street was a scattered collection of shacks and cottages where dwelt the white population of the little town. The south end of the main street entered the Indian village. This was a long, crooked street close to the beach, and lined on either side by shacks adorned with weirdly carved and painted totem poles.

On the beach before this street lay dozens of dugout canoes of all sizes—from the fifty-foot war vessel with its hideous painted figurehead, down to warped and blackened little one-man boats less than eight feet in length—the hulks of worn-out sailing craft, and a

litter of general rubbish.

The village was quiet, for this was the salmon-fishing season in southeastern Alaska, and all those who were able to work were away fishing for the canneries. The remaining inhabitants of the queer little town consisted of a half dozen klooches and as many bucks, too aged and rheumatic to be of any service whatever, and a few pariah dogs too utterly worthless to be claimed even by the Siwash. Ravens perched on the ridgepoles of the houses and walked with their dignified strut about the narrow, crooked street unmolested, filling the air with their incessant, querulous bickering, so peculiarly human in tone.

In the white portion of the village three saloons were open. Bill took a drink in each, and went forth disgusted. In each bar were a few ragged, shambling hangers-on who responded to his invitation to drink with an alacrity that stamped them instantly for the habitual "moochers" they were. In none of the places was there any crowd. The streets were practically deserted. Heenan at length encountered an old ac-

quaintance, a long-bearded, sour-visaged old man, incredibly gnarled and bent, squatted on a box in front of a grocery store, discontentedly sucking the stem of a corncob pipe.

"What's wrong with this camp,

'Muley,'" he inquired of him.

"Good camp," the old man declared jerkily. "The mayor's a low-down, ornery, bug-bitten, lazy, no-count thief! The town marshal's gone all the time, peddlin' whisky to the Indians out on the fishin' grounds, an' they ain't a man left in the place with gimp enough to bust a law while he's away. Everybody here's dead broke an' deserves to be. They's nothin' to justify a camp here, an' they never was an' never will be. It's onhealthy, an' gittin' worse all the while."

"Lovely place!" Heenan agreed with him.

Muley Perkins nodded. "Good camp," he repeated. "Fine place to think in. Nothin' ever happens to take your mind off your thoughts. I want to die here."

"Rather die here than live here," Heenan agreed again. "I wouldn't do

either by choice.'

"Fine place to die," Muley insisted. "Never notice it. The only difference is, after your heart knocks off, they put you under the muskeg, an' while it works, you stay on the topside. Just as much goin' on underneath as on top. I picked this camp out to die in when they cleaned me 'below.'"

"You went below, huh? I heard you made a stake up in the Susitna."

The old man cackled and clicked his

dangling heels in glee.

"Hundred thousan' I sold out for," he chortled. "Went to Frisco an' spent the las' smooth dime in three months. Yes, siree, I had my time, Bill! Things ain't as swift there as they was once, or I'd been back quicker, but I made pretty fair time. I hired the whole top floor o' the swellest hotel in town,

an' I never stepped foot out'n the place till I was clean, I didn't. They was a show troupe stranded in town, an' I hired the whole kaboodle to move in with me an' help drink what I bought. Hired my own barber an' a nigger to black my shoes. I didn't pike, I didn't. When the roll was gone, I sneaked down the fire escape an' walked to Seattle. Then I hopped into the guts of a ship an' stowed away till it got here. I been here two years, now, waitin' to die peaceful an' thinkin' over what a time I had. I ain't thought half through it all yit. I had mine, Bill."

Heenan grinned. "Come take a drink, Muley, an' we'll have a little time all our own. I got to stay here a year in the next four days, an' you're the only sport I've seen in the place that looks

like he knew how to go."

Perkins shook his head. "I can have more fun stayin' sober enough to think about the time I had, Bill," he explained. "Say, if yuh want to eat good food an' drink good licker an' git a good game when they is any game runnin' in this tomb, keep away from the white joints. I'm ashamed o' my own race to have to tell yuh that the only decent place in camp is run by a chink. Go down to the end o' the street, an' on the left, the las' house yuh come to, you'll see Wang Ho's place. Tell him how you're fixed, an' he'll give yuh things to live by an' wake yuh up in time for the steamer."

Wang Ho's proved to be a long, narrow, story-and-a-half, partially painted frame structure evidently intended for a store, for there was a big show window in front. A thick, embroidered curtain, however, nullified the purpose for which it was put in, completely hiding the interior of the place from the street. A hand-painted board sign suspended above the door announced that Wang Ho, as a restaurateur, stood prepared to minister to the gastronomic needs of whosoever stood ready to part

with the sum of seventy-five cents in return for one meal. One Japanese and two white restaurants, a short distance away up the street, advertised their meals at thirty-five cents each.

"I don't reckon Wang cares a lot about whether he gets trade or not," Heenan observed, taking note of the sign. "Anyhow, here goes for a sample

o' the chink grub, Tin Can."

He opened the door and entered a small, dark room in which were two dining tables, a counter, and a small show case containing a limited supply of cigars and some Chinese knick-knacks. A heavy portière hung over the door leading to the rear apartments; and through this, in answer to the bell that the opening of the front door had rung, came a thin, gray-haired Chinaman. He was dressed in a blue blouse and loose blue trousers. His bare feet were thrust into slippers.

"Slap us together a couple o' good dinners, John?" Heenan inquired, as he

seated himself.

The Chinaman nodded and smiled. "You wantee Chinee dlinner?" Melican dlinner?"

"Heap Melican dinner, John. No likee Chinee grub. You savee rare roast beef? Mashed potatoes? Bread an' butter?"

"Have got," the Celestial assured him. "Allee same six bittee lis place."

"John, I'm a hot sport, an' I've got more money than sense," Heenan confided. He drew a handful of small gold pieces from his pocket. "Plenty money, John. Me an' my friend've got to stick around this graveyard till the steamer comes, an' somebody's goin' to take some o' this money away from us in the meantime. You like-um money, John?"

"Vely good."

"The guy that gets a fraction o' this roll's goin' to be some lad that can show us a soft bed an' good booze an' some more reasons for livin', between now

an' the time the steamer goes. You savee?"

The Chinaman nodded gravely. "Me savee. You like tea, huh?"

"Coffee, John."

"You like tea," the Chinaman insisted. "Col' tea, huh? No like hot; allee same like col' tea?"

Heenan studied the sallow countenance and detected the slightest droop to one eyelid.

"If my mother'd nursed me on cold tea, I wouldn't be weaned yet," he announced. "Sometimes, John, I come to think that chinks is human. Hustle the tea, John, an' have it plenty cold!"

"Me savee." The Chinaman shuffled to the door, opened it, peered up and down the street, and then, closing it, turned the key. "Col' tea tlase bletter when dlo' shut," he said gravely. "Much bletter." He nodded and shuffled away to the rear room.

He returned immediately with a decanter of whisky and two glasses.

"I think mebbe we'll be able to put in the time with this chink," Heenan declared, after he had swallowed the first glass of the liquor. "That's good stuff, Tin Can."

Tin Can grunted a dubious assent, and glanced around him uneasily.

"Tastes good," he admitted grudgingly. "I hope it ain't poisoned. Me, I like chinks same as I like polecats—fur away an' down the wind from me. This place smells like the inside of a medicine bottle."

Heenan sniffed.

"Opium," he whispered. "I've smelled it before, Somebody back there's been smokin' hop."

"Uh-huh. I see a bunch o' Digger Injuns fattenin' on stewed grasshoppers once, but I bet even they wouldn't like hop. Smokin' hop is the only thing I know I wouldn't do once to see what it was like. Le's eat an' get out o' here."

"It can't be no worse than the rest

o' this camp. We'll play the joint an' see what it looks like."

The dinner came on soon, and it proved an excellent one of its kind. The beef was tender, and the potatoes were light and flaky. There were canned peas and beans, two kinds of canned fruit, and a deliciously cooked apple pie. The first sip of the black coffee brought a grunt of pleasure from Heenan.

"Chinks is part human," he declared gravely. "Don't tell me. No animal could ever make coffee like that."

"If they're part human, then I'm part not human," Tin Can growled. "They ain't nothin' o' me like no part o' them. Le's go."

"Aw, set still. Hey, John!" The Chinaman shuffled out from the rear room. "Good dinner, John," Heenan praised. "Just leave the rest o' this cold tea on the table an' keep the change out o' this five-dollar piece."

The Chinaman caught the coin Hee-

nan tossed, and grinned.

"You come out lis way an' dlink col' tea," he invited, beckoning rearward with his thumb. "Lis bletter place."

Heenan rose and followed with alacrity, Tin Can grumbling dismal prophecies, between the portières into a narrow hallway and back to a room that was evidently near the rear of the long building. Heenan gasped with astonishment when he stepped into it. It was about eighteen feet square, and the walls and ceiling were hung with rich silks of many colors. All the lights, of which there were many, were shrouded with crimson silk and gave forth a restful, rosy glow. In the center of the room was a large, greentopped poker table, decked with chips and cards. In each corner were hung brass pots containing lighted joss sticks, and the thin tendrils of sweetly odorous smoke ascended slowly and swirled among the folds of silk draped from the ceiling. Around the walls were low.

luxuriously padded couches, draped with the same rich silks that adorned the walls. At the rear on either side were portières. The Chinaman pulled one of these aside and pushed a concealed button that snapped on the lights, disclosing a dainty bedroom.

"Tloo bedloom," he said, indicating the darkened one on the other side. "Nice place. Plenty booze. Allee plospector have plenty money—plenty men some time come here play poker. Good dlinner, good bleakfast, each man six

dolla day. You stay?"

"Will a bear steal honey?" Heenan countered. He dropped into a padded easy-chair, and elevated his heels to the poker table. "John, old scout, bring on your cold tea an' whatever other trimmin's you've got, an' consider the place rented from now till Tuesday. Why, this is just like fallin' into the river an' bumpin' your nose on a prize nugget. Tin Can, this here is what I call class!"

The Chinaman shuffled away, and Tin Can explored the room gingerly.

"This is my idea of no place at all to be," he gave the result of his examination,

"You ain't refined, Tin Can," Heenan criticized him. "You're much too rough by nature to—— Well, holy Mike!"

Heenan dropped his feet from the table and rose, abashed. A girl stood in the doorway, bearing a tray laden with bottles and glasses. She was a young girl, dressed in a voluminous flowered kimono of red silk. Her rich, glossy black hair was parted in the middle and drawn smoothly back from her well-shaped forhead. Her black eyes were almond-shaped, but only very slightly aslant. Her features were Caucasian-the nose small, but Grecian in outline, and the chin well chiseled and prominent. The face was tinged with light olive, and the delicate oval cheeks were flushed with pink. She made a

demure little bow, and, smiling shyly, glided to the table.

"You like music?" she inquired, in a soft voice without a trace of accent.

"Huh? Music? Oh—sure," Heenan stammered, "Sure I do, Yes."

The girl took down a mandolin hidden by a fold of silk on the wall, and, seating herself on one of the lounges, began to play. Heenan stood by the table, watching her in amazement.

"You-you belong here?" he asked,

at length.

The girl nodded. "You play nice," Heenan praised her. "That Chinaman, John, he your man?"

"My uncle," the girl informed him.
"Oh! You—you don't talk like Chinee woman."

"I'm white," the girl said proudly.
"Almost white. My father was a white man."

"Oh! Did he live around here?"

The girl shook her head. "San Francisco." Her face twitched piteously. "He died."

"Oh, that's too bad!" Heenan said awkwardly.

A voice calling in Chinese came from the front, and the girl rose with a start. "I'll play some more when I come back. You wait."

Heenan drew a deep breath when the girl vanished through the door. "Well, what d'yuh know about that?" he demanded of Tin Can. "Ain't she a beaut?"

"Too lemon colored to suit me," Tin Can dissented. "You go gettin' stuck on a Chinee girl an' we will have a nice time. Le's you an' me leave here, Bill. I know a walk'll do us good."

"Walk if yuh want to."

Tin Can shook his head. "Nope. I'm the same to yuh as the tail to a fool horse. I can't tell the legs where to take me, but if they carry me into a hot place, I get burned same's if I'd wanted to go."

"Aw, take a drink an' brace up. Can't she make that mandolin go, though?"

"I don't need no drink. I feel foolish enough in this place sober."

The girl reëntered, carrying two carved opium pipes and lamps.

"You smoke?" she smiled. "I play nice music and you smoke."

"Not on your tintype!" Heenan declined. "None o' that in mine."

"O-o-o-oh, he very nice," the girl cooed. "You try-just a little bit. He very nice."

"Maybe. That's kind o' out o' my line, though, sis. I don't know how to go about it."

"I show you," the girl insisted. "You lie here so, and I show you."

Heenan grinned and nodded at Har-"Him, too?" he asked.

"Oh, yes. You lie here-he lie here. I show you. He very nice."

"I'm game," Heenan declared recklessly, and awkwardly stretched himself out on the lounge the girl indicated. "Come on, Tin Can!"

"I'm comin'," Tin Can said sadly, as he stretched himself out. "Now they ain't nothin' left I won't do once."

"How much o' this stuff can yuh get away with without gettin' woozy?" Heenan inquired of the girl, as she lit the lamps and twirled the small brown pellets over the flame.

"Oh, he very nice. He don't hurt. You see."

Deftly she adjusted the drug in both pipes, and, after an initiate puff at each, handed one to Heenan and the other to Harris.

"Smoke it just like cigarette," she instructed. "Inhale 'way deep down and hold the smoke as long as you can. He very nice."

Heenan took a tentative draw and made a wry face. "I think I'd rather smoke tea," he declared. "Don't taste like much to me."

"He taste better soon," the girl as-

sured him. "You try and see. I play now and he'll sound pretty. You see."

Feeling very foolish, Heenan relaxed on the cushions and drew deeply from the sputtering pipe, while the girl took a seat on a footstool and began to The first effect strum the mandolin. of the drug that Heenan was conscious of was a pervasive feeling of utter content. He realized vaguely that the drug was taking effect on him, but with the feeling of peace came also a complete lack of interest in what might happen. He had intended to stop smoking the moment he felt any effect from it, but he did not care now. He had some difficulty guiding the mouthpiece of the pipe to his lips, and this struck him as uproariously funny.

The girl seated on the stool near him seemed to him to be floating in the air several feet from the floor, and she was surrounded by a hazy halo of luminous The tones of the mandolin became most piercingly sweet, and each note shivered through his being with a separate pleasurable thrill. Then suddenly he became convinced that he was asleep and dreaming. He felt that he was enough awake to realize that he was dreaming and vet sufficiently asleep for

the dream to be vivid.

In the dream he saw the face of a man he had not seen for twenty years. It was the face of Bob Cusick, an old enemy whom he had fought with during his first days as a trapper in the North. Cusick had been a crooked gambler. and it had been through Heenan's exposure of him that he had been driven out of the camp. Now Cusick was bending above him and going through his pockets while he slept. Heenan saw him take the map and heard his laugh of exultation when he unrolled it. He heard Cusick debate with some one he could not see as to whether he should kill Heenan or not. He decided at length not to, as the danger was too great, and left. With his leaving, the

dream stopped and Heenan sank into the oblivion of a sound sleep,

His next sensation was a jarring one, as if he had bumped his head sharply on something solid. He slowly came to full consciousness and the realization that his head was aching horribly. He was possessed of a terrible nausea. He groaned, and with an effort opened his eyes and looked about him, unable at first to remember where he was.

The girl was gone. Heenan shouted, but no one came. Groaning from the pain in his head and the nausea, he staggered to his feet and waked Tin Can. The latter rose to a sitting posture, moaning loudly and pressing his aching head with his hands. The air in the place was heavy yet from the fumes of opium, and Heenan reeled as he stood.

"Let's get out in the air," he said

thickly.

Tin Can rose and staggered. "I hope we don't die," he muttered. "I like to see justice done, I do, an' death's too damned easy for a pair o' fools like us. For the sake o' fair play, I hope I live."

Followed by Tin Can, Heenan reeled through the passage to the restaurant in front. The light was lit, and behind the counter sat a fat young Chinaman whom Heenan had not seen before. He looked up for a moment as the two sick men entered the room, and then went calmly on with his work of making marks on a long sheet of pink paper with a small brush.

"Where's the other guy?" Heenan de-

manded crossly.

"Lother guy?" the Chinaman repeated blankly. "No savee."

"You savee all right, you slant-eyed, cinnamon-hided son o' sin! Where's the fella we did business with when we first come in?"

"No savee."

"You soon will," Heenan declared savagely and reached for him. But he

stopped very suddenly and backed away before the nose of a large-caliber revolver poked over the edge of the counter. The calm, fat Chinaman who held it pointed to the door.

"You go now," he ordered. "You come lis place, you get dlunk, you laise

hell. Now you go."

"Well—what became of the girl?" Heenan inquired, more politely.

 "Gel? No gel lis place. You no good man. You go now." He gestured suggestively with the revolver.

Heenan started to remonstrate, but suddenly his face blanched. He reached quickly into the inner pocket of his vest. The map was gone!

"Rolled!" he gasped.

He felt quickly in his other pockets, discovered that nothing else was missing, and started for the Chinaman with outstretched, clutching hands, unmindful of the menacing gun.

"You'll produce that map or I'll-"

He stopped, hands still extended, eyes fixed on the hammer of the revolver, which was slowly rising under the pressure of the clawlike finger of the Celestial.

"You come lis place, get dlunk, make tlouble, I kill you both," the Chinaman chanted. "You no go now, I shoot plitty quick, you bettee!"

Slowly Heenan backed away, opened the door, and passed out, closely fol-

lowed by Tin Can.

"Whatever's the row?" the latter inquired miserably, drawing in great drafts of the cool air. "I wonder what they is in opium besides cyanide an' rattlesnake poison?"

Heenan clutched him by the arm.

"The map!" he whispered. "I was rolled. It's gone, Tin Can!"

One of Tin Can's redeeming traits was that he invariably growled when there was no occasion for growling, and as surely refrained from complaint or condemnatory speech when it was merited. He took the news of the loss

of the map calmly.

"Well, we'll get it back," he prophesied. "No chink can put anything like that across on us. Mostlike he don't know the map is worth anything, but just took it on general principles along with the rest."

"He didn't take nothin' else. My

roll's safe."

"Oh! That makes it different. Just took the map, huh? Then he knowed what it was."

"He must have. How do you sup-

pose---"

Heenan stopped and swore suddenly. The dream he had had while under the influence of the opium was coming back to him. He recalled the face of his old enemy, Bob Cusick. He remembered the searching fingers that had gone through his pockets. He slapped his thigh and swore savagely.

"Dream!" he snorted. "Dream! That was no dream! That was Cusick himself goin' through my pockets, an' I was too far gone to know it. It was

Cusick himself!"

"Breathe deep an' you'll come to,"
Tin Can advised, thinking his friend
still under the influence of the drug. "I
felt dippy, too, till I got a handful o'
air into my lungs. Breathe deep now."

Hurriedly Heenan told him of what he had thought a dream and was now sure was a reality. When he had done,

Tin Can nodded.

"I seen that feller, too. Big-jawed, gray-faced guy, with short hair an' a mustache. Sure, I seen him in the room, but then I see a pack o' angels with green wings flyin' all around, an' about a million little boys an' girls playin' tag, an' a dog team o' full-sized tigers driv' by a undersized chimpanzee dressed in a feather parkay, an' other things like that, so I don't pay much attention to an ordinary guy with a mustache. Did you see them other things I speak of?" Heenan shook his head.

"Well, then, seein' we both get a look at this one party with the mustache, mostlike he was sure 'nough there. You know him, you say?"

"Yes. But I haven't laid eyes on him for twenty years. He was a first-class

crook."

"He don't seem to have changed much," Tin Can commented. don't look a lot good for us. If we make a bawl to the marshal, he comes down here an' pinches this one chink that we got to admit we never see. The chink tells him we got drunk in the place an' went to sleep an' tried to make trouble when we woke up. We tell him somebody stole the map of a mine location from us, an' maybe he pinches That don't get us anythis chink. where. Say, let's go interview that talkin' tombstone with the big chin moss that steered us there. Mebbe so he can wise us up to something."

"We'll look him up."

They started away down the dark street to where the lights from the three saloons cast patches on the uneven plank roadway. It was between eleven and twelve o'clock, and nearly dark. A flying scud of cloud obscured the moon, and a few stray, wind-driven raindrops pelted their faces. From the steep hillside in back of the town came the eerie thrum of the wind rushing through the treetops. Tin Can laughed dismally.

"Wasn't she a beaut?" he chanted.

"Oh, a peach, huh?"

Heenan flushed. "Needn't rub it in," he said sulkily. "I fell for her proper, an' she trimmed me. She got my num-

ber, all right."

"She didn't size up like a crook to me," Tin Can admitted unexpectedly. "Seein' I didn't take her for one, she probably is. If a man'd just copper my judgment on women, he'd win every time."

In the third saloon they entered, they discovered Perkins seated on a beer keg in the rear, swinging his feet and still sucking at his, black old pipe. Heenan called him out into the street.

"What d'yuh know about that Wang Ho's place yuh steered us into?" he

inquired.

"Good place," the old man answered.
"Give yuh as good a time for your money there as anywhere else. Why?"

"They robbed us."

"Well, what d'yuh expect? Yuh ain't a piker, are yuh, Bill? I never thought yuh was the brand o' man to go huntin' for a good time an' then try to hold out an eatin' stake. Robbed yuh? Yuh must 'a' tried to pike on 'em, then. If yuh just give 'em what yuh got an' tell 'em to wake yuh up when it's spent, they'll treat yuh fine. They did me. Robbed yuh! Served yuh right! How'd yuh expect 'em to treat yuh right if yuh go pikin' an' holdin' out on 'em. I'm ashamed o' yuh, Bill!"

"This is different," Heenan assured nim. "Is this Wang Ho a tall, thin

chink with gray hair?"

"Nope. Wang, he's short an' fat an' greasy an' his hair's black an'——"
"Who's the tall, thin one?"

"Search me. I see 'em come an' go now an' then, but mostly I can't tell chinks one from t'other nohow, an' I ain't got no wish to if I could, so I don't try. I just give him my money when I——"

"Who's the girl? Where does she

come in?"

"Girl? I didn't see no girl. Oh, yes; I mind, some days gone, I see a girl in the door as I'm passin' down there. A Chinee girl, you mean?"

"Yes."

"I dunno who she is. Why?"

"Oh, nothin'. What kind of a place does Wang run, Muley? What's his

big game?"

"Smugglin' opium. He's got a gas schooner that runs to sea an' takes the dope from some o' the liners from China that come down the coast on the way to Frisco. Then he caches it somewhere hereabouts in the mountings an' gits it south in salmon cases, in cahoots with a couple o' cannerymen I could name if they wasn't friends o' mine."

"Oh! Do yuh know Cusick, Muley? Bob Cusick?"

The old man hesitated. "Well, now, Bill, if you won't think, from my sayin' that I know the skunk, that I'm some kind of a friend o' his, I'll admit that I do. Cusick, he beat it out o' the country for many a year, an' showed up around these parts along last summer for the first time that I know of. Yes, I know Bob Cusick, an' I don't know nothin' good of him. I reckon no white man does, neither. When a man has to take to livin' entire with chinks——"

"Livin' with chinks?"

"A man that knowed him in San Francisco told me that he'd been livin' entire with chinks for years an' years, an' since he come up here, they ain't no man seed him friendly with white men. Routin' with chinks all the while, an'——"

"He in the smugglin' game with 'em?"

"Now, Bill, I never got into no trouble by knowin' a lot, but I've got into some awful tangles tellin' part of what I knowed, an' I don't aim to get in no more the same way. I aim to live peaceful in this town till I die, an' I ain't gittin mixed in no ructions by an overflow o' words. No, sir!"

"Don't this Wang Ho ever tangle with the U. S. men or the city marshal?"

"Now, Bill, if you done had a bum job in this God-forgotten land, workin' for a gover'ment that was rich enough to do 'most anything except pay yuh a decent salary, an' somebody done poured enough gold dust into your eye to make it worth while to have bad eyesight, could yuh see good, Bill? I put it to yuh: Would yuh see good?"

"I get yuh," Heenan grunted. "He's

got the works sewed up."

"I didn't say that, Bill," the cautious Perkins insisted. "That ain't what I said, an' yuh know it. If yuh think it's what I meant, why, I can't help that,

can I? Certainly not."

"It looks worse instead of better," Tin Can said, as they walked away down the dark street. "This Wang Ho an' his gang must be some pretty pumpkins around this neck o' the woods. Bill, we got to be as wise now as we was foolish when we hit that hop, an' believe me, if we are, nobody's got a chance with us!"

Heenan squatted gloomily with his back resting against the side of a build-

ing on a dark corner.

"If I'd only had sense enough to memorize that map," he said bitterly, "I could take a chance o' beatin' them back there an' stakin' the claim before they made it. I——"

He broke off suddenly and reached for his gun, laying a warning hand on

Tin Can's arm.

"What is it?" Harris whispered.

"Something in them weeds, there," Heenan whispered back. "A drunk, mebbe." He lifted his voice. "I've got the drop on yuh. Come out o' that an' let's have a look at yuh!"

"Don't shoot," a woman's voice came back. "I want to speak with you."

Heenan muttered an oath, and, stepping down into the clump of weeds, peered close. It was the girl who had played on the mandolin and induced him to indulge in the pipe. Her black hair was blown in disarray about her small oval face.

"Don't speak loud, please!" she entreated. "You come with me. I want

to talk to you."-

"You don't say! I s'pose yuh want me to follow yuh blind to some safe place, where your gang can cut my throat all nice an' quiet, huh?"

"Please! I'm not bad girl, no, no!

Cusick is bad, Wang is bad, my Uncle Lee, he's very bad, but I'm good girl. I'm good white girl. Your name Heenan?"

"Yes."

"You friends with my man, Walt Mc-Gregor."

"The trapper? What---"

"He my man," the girl insisted earnestly. "I'm going to marry with him, like all white girl, in the church. You come, please, and I talk to you."

"Well-"

"Yes, please. I'm good girl. You help me find my man, and I help you

find the map they stole."

"It's a go!" Heenan decided suddenly. "You've double-crossed me once to-day, an' why I should give yuh a chance to repeat I don't know, but go ahead. Come on, Tin Can!"

"Like a lamb to the lion's den," Tin Can muttered. "B-a-a-a-a-a! Kill me quick, somebody! I plumb hate to live.

Oh, I'm comin'."

The girl led the way silently down to the water front under a dock to an empty storeroom. Here she struck a match and lit a small lantern. Heenan looked at her curiously. She was dressed in a blue shirt waist, a rough man's coat, and a mud-stained corduroy skirt.

"I run away," she said bluntly, when she had lit the lantern. "If they find me now, they kill me. You be good

to me?"

"I think I will," Heenan said. "Now what's the idea? Give us the

straight o' this."

"Cusick is bad and my Uncle Lee is very bad man," the girl said. "They made me give you drugged opium, so they could steal the map from—"

"How'd they know we had the map?"
"Cusick saw you after you buried the

man you---'

"Cusick?" Heenan said sharply. "Saw us? Tin Can, we're a pair o' idiots! Remember what Shep said?

One of them men who was after him was a chink or a Jap? It was— Little girl, has your uncle been away lately?"

"He been away with Cusick."

"How long?"

"Two weeks. He come back this morning early—"

"It was Lee an' Cusick done for

Shep," Heenan said grimly.

"They make me give you drugged opium and then Cusick stole the map," the girl went on. "Cusick wanted to kill you, but my uncle was afraid, because maybe people see you come in his place. Then they started for the storehouse in the hills, and took me with them, for fear I might tell. They're afraid of me now, because I don't like Cusick."

"The storehouse?" Heenan questioned.

"Where they keep the opium. It's in the crater of Nitchka. I know the place. I help you get the map, and then you help me get Walter. You do that?"

"You bet I will, little girl. Your chink uncle don't fall strong for Walter, huh?"

"He want me to take Cusick for my man, but not marry with him in the church, like all white girl. If I don't have Walter, I kill myself. Cusick is bad man."

"You've got him ticketed right. Where's your white father, little girl?"

"He die one year ago. My mother dead a long time now. I don't know any one but Lee. He's very bad man."

"Where's McGregor?"

The girl's lips quivered. "I haven't seen him for long time," she said tremulously. "Two weeks he's gone. He say he come back for me, but Lee wants me to have Cusick for my man, so I run away. I help you if you help me."

Heenan nodded. "What time did

Cusick an' your uncle leave for Nitchka?"

"About nine o'clock. They took me on the boat with them, but while they were in the engine room, I run away. They look all around for me, and then they left."

"Do you know where their place is

up in the crater?"

The girl nodded. "I been there. I know the way."

"You'll show us?"

"I show you and you help me find Walter?"

"I'll do that. How many will there be there?"

"I don't know. Sometimes Cusick and Lee; sometimes they meet the men from the schooner there with the opium. I think maybe they meet the men to-night."

"How many from the schooner?"

"Three-sometimes four."

"Five or six altogether. What about it, Tin Can?"

"We ain't doin' no good for our country here," Tin Can answered. "Le's go visit this naughty bunch."

"Get a launch?"

"Them launches is too talkative," Tin Can objected. "Yuh can hear 'em sputter five mile away. Might as well send 'em a telegram that we're on our way as go in one o' them things. It's only seven miles to the foot o' Nitchka. Le's swipe a canoe from Injun town, an' go quiet."

"That's best. You know where to land, little girl?"

"I know the place."

"Well, let's be on our way. We can make it before it comes full daylight."

They picked their way out from among the piling and down the beach toward the Indian village. The rain had ceased, but the wind was rising, and the sound of its passage among the treetops on the mountainside contained an increasing note of menace. The

waves kicked up in the small and sheltered bay lapped the beach noisily.

"Be wet ridin' outside if this wind

holds," Tin Can prophesied.

Heenan grunted. "I belong at the bottom of the sea," he said bitterly. "I bet I'd poison the crabs! To get into a mess like this after the promise

I give Shep!"

"I wouldn't sleep peaceful o' nights myself if Old Lady Williams lost out account o' our damn' foolishness," Tin Can added. He stumbled on a boat in the dark. "Strike a light, Bill, an' let's see if this craft looks foolproof."

Mount Nitchka, one of the hundreds of extinct volcanoes scattered throughout southeastern and southwestern Alaska, rears its cup-shaped head nearly four thousand feet above the sea that beats at its rocky base. The irregular circle of the cone is-roughly -perhaps three hundred yards in diameter. The circumference of this cone is like to the rim of a giant vase, roughly notched. The walls of the c-ater itself, some seven or eight hundred feet deep, are all honeycombed with caves like unto the horizontal stopes in a mine.

In one of these rock caves or natural stopes, a hundred feet below the rim of the cone on the eastern side of the crater, five men sat on blanket packs about a tremendous lamp with a circular wick placed on the rock floor. The cave was about seven feet high by thirty long and twelve deep. On the outer edge, overhanging the pit below, ran a bulging ledge of rock-a natural balcony-some three feet broad. Above the cave, a bulge of rock hid the rim of the crater from the view of any one standing on this overhanging platform. A small rope ladder dangling at the entrance of the cave told of the manner of descent from the hidden rim above. The rear of the cave was piled high with salmon cases; some were

empty, others were packed with small round tins. There was a Yukon stove in the place, a neatly stacked pile of firewood, and a pile of provisionssmoked fish, meats, and groceries.

Cusick and the Chinaman who had dealt with Heenan and Harris sat close together on one side of the lamp. Of, the other three, two, by their appearance, were sailors-hulking, light-haired Swedes—while the third was a short, squat, hook-nosed, bow-legged, stocky individual addressed only as "cap," who spoke with a pronounced Yankee twang.

"I'm no coward an' well ye know it," the stocky little man rasped. "I've been buckin' the law for forty years, runnin' contraband everywhere from Valparaiso to Nome, an' I take notice that them as wants a risky job done neat most generally look the old man up. When I 'fell' in Frisco, I did my bit without a squeal, didn't I? You know who all I could 'a' lagged for San Ouentin if I'd been minded to open my trap. Lee? There was twelve of 'em in on that deal, an' you know that I could 'a' gone scot-free if I'd been minded to squeak. But you bet I didn't! They gimme the water cure till I fainted, too, but I never spoke the name o' any pal that was in on that deal with me. I'm no dern coward, but I'm goin' to lay off this game for a while. That revenue cutter's been hangin' round these waters too steady to suit me. I've sighted her the last two trips, both in an' out, an' I'm goin' to lay off for a while. That's me!"

"I guess other halibut schooners have sighted her, too," Cusick said scornfully. "There isn't a chance of their making this cache. Walker's goin' to start shippin' his salmon in a week or two now, an' we want all we can get to send below with his stuff an' make a grand clean-up. We can all make enough on this deal, if we carry it through, to quit the game an' go it

easy."

"Nary another trip right now," cap declared. "I've got a feelin' same as I had before they nebbed me in Frisco, an' I'm goin' to lay off in time this trip. I got by pretty easy in San Quentin—trusty from the first week—but it was no joke, an', believe me, I'm not lookin' for board an' lodgin' on McNeil's Island. I've talked with boys that have done bits in those Federal pens, an' they tell me they're frights. Clean up on what I've brought in already, an' we'll have a soft winter."

"Meet the Oleander Monday, cap," Cusick urged. "We've got two hundred and fifty tins, all paid for, coming on her, an' if we could just add that to

what we've already-"

"Nothin' doin'. I had a nice little fortune put together there in Frisco, an' it was tryin' to add that last little bit to make enough that got me my tumble. Not again!"

The elderly Chinaman forestalled Cusick's retort with a twitch of his arm. He rose and beckoned Cusick

aside.

"No likee," he whispered. "Lis govelment boat lun aloun' too much. We blettah glet lis dope to clannery vely quick, so? I vely much 'flaid about Sadie. She vely blad gel, lun away so."

Cusick swore fluently. "You think

she'd crack?"

Lee shook his head. "You vely blig damn' fool bling her lis place," he criticized.

"She was your niece and I thought she was all right. It never even occurred to me that she didn't already know about it."

"Vely blad," Lee chanted. "Now she lun away, vely much more blad."

 any size there like the samples——Well, we won't have to monkey with opium, Lee."

Lee nodded. "You go now. I take

clare all thing here."

"I'm not goin' till daylight," Cusick grumbled. "I've had enough o' that trail in the dark."

"What are you two crooks hatchin'?" cap demanded harshly. "We're all in on this game, an' I don't like these two-handed side bets."

"Other business, cap," Cusick explained. "We've decided to lay off with what we've got an' move the dope down to the cannery right away."

"To-mollow night," Lee nodded.
"I'll be glad when it's done," cap
muttered. "I've got that old feelin' in

my bones. I don't like it."

"Well, deal a few hands o' blackjack an' forget it, cap." Cusick laughed.

The old man's eyes brightened as he drew out a deck. "By Hickey, I'll do that, too!"

The five gathered about one blanket and the game began. A small stone rattled down the steep wall of the crater above the cave and lit on the ledge. The captain jumped to his feet and whipped a short-barreled revolver from his coat pocket.

"Aw, set down," Cusick said wearily.
"You've got the hickwillies to-night.
They're always rattlin' down that way
from the rim, especially when the wind
blows."

The captain tiptoed to the ledge and listened attentively. There was no further suspicious sound, and he pocketed

his gun and resumed his seat.

not drawin' to that to-night. I'll pay eighteen."

To reach the base of Nitchka from the village of Satka, it is necessary to cross an open channel five miles wide. The northern end of this channel, at one extremity of the island on which Nitchka is located, is the beginning of a strip of water much wider, though dotted with innumerable small islands, which runs into the open Pacific. At the northern end of the first channel, the ground swell from the ocean is at all times perceptible, and this, combined with the tide rips and the strong winds that whistle through the narrow passage between the mountain ranges, makes one of the nastiest seas imagin-

able for a small boat.

The shallow, eighteen-foot dugout canoe, tossed high on the white crests of the choppy waves, was continually half full of water and in danger of being swamped. In the bow knelt Heenan, plying his short paddle furiously, deluged by the wind-driven spray from each successive crest as the sharp prow cut through it. In the stern Harris fought, panting heavily from his exertions, but never too winded to waste an occasional breath in unheard grumbling. The half-caste girl, Sadie, sat flat in the bottom of the canoe, bailing steadily with an old oil can. Tide and wind were against them. They had left Satka near to midnight, and had accomplished the first four miles, through comparatively smooth water, in a little more than half an hour. Then the full force of the wind had struck them, and the next two miles had cost them nearly an hour. It was half past one in the morning, and the wind was blowing more strongly all the while. Both men were well spent. The girl was chilled to the bone from her immersion in the cold water, and shivering in spite of her constant work at bailing.

The conquering of the last mile con-

sumed more than forty minutes, and when the shore loomed close ahead, both Harris and Heenan were exhausted from their violent efforts. It was pitch dark and impossible to pick a landing place. When they were within ten yards of the shore on which the choppy waves were breaking angrily, Heenan gave one final stroke, and, turning, grasped the girl in his arms. The canoe rose on the crest of a wave and came down with a crash on a protruding rock. The three were pitched overboard by the shock. Harris had little difficulty in scrambling ashore, but Heenan, encumbered by the girl as he was, was hard put to it to attain the safety of the beach.

Rolled under again and again by the swiftly succeeding, short waves, slipping and stumbling on the slimy, smooth bowlders, bruised and bleeding from a nasty contusion on his head, he at length freed himself from the turbulent waters, and stood panting by the side of his partner, with the girl lying limp in his arms.

"I'll bet I knocked her out on one o' them rocks," he panted. "No chance to get a light, an' it's darker'n the inside of a black bear." He fell to chafing the girl's wrists and temples.

"Dawg-gone water!" Tin Can muttered. "If fish just had legs an' lungs, it'd be plumb useless, wouldn't it?"

The girl gasped and stirred. "Take it easy," Heenan soothed. "You hurt anywheres?"

"N-no," she stammered. "I-just c-cold. I c-can w-walk now."

"Can yuh find the trail in this dark?" "Yes. There is very big rock on the shore at the very end of the island. We are below it yet. If we walk the beach, we sure come to it. The trail goes right up from the top of that rock."

"I know where that rock is," Tin Can put in. "I remember seein' it on the point. Big's any man-sized house. It's ahead a piece yet."

Heenan bent his back. "Climb on," he instructed the girl. "It'll be colder ridin', but it's better'n cuttin' your lit-

tle feet on these rocks."

With the girl astraddle of his broad back, her slender arms clasped about his neck, Heenan set off down the rocky beach, stumbling frequently on the treacherous wet rocks in his haste, but never endangering the tender burden he bore. The sense of the soft little body. the touch of the small arms, her pretty, comradely trust in him, filled Heenan with a tender glow of protective affection for the strange girl. Dominant, powerful, self-reliant at all times as the big man was, weakness or need in any one invariably invoked a response of aid from him. Under pretense of arranging her arms more comfortably, he reached up and took her small hand in one of his own rough ones. It was unbelievably soft and fine of texture. Heenan touched it as a flower lover might stroke the soft petals of a beautiful rose, filled with a sense of pleasant wonder.

"Pretty little kid!" he thought to himself, and whether or not the girl sensed the fact, nothing short of Heenan's death would have resulted in her re-

turn to her uncle.

Within fifteen minutes, Harris, in the lead, announced that he had bumped into the great rock that stood out on the beach like a giant boot toe thrust out from the forest. Laboriously they scaled this rock, and, guided by the girl's instructions, Harris located the narrow trail cut through the tangled under-Slipping, stumbling, drenched by the shower from every branch their passage shook, feeling out the trail in the dark with their feet and hands, they started the long climb to the summit. When they emerged from the woods at the timber line, the clouds to the eastward were faintly alight with the first

hint of the coming dawn. Over shale and rough rock their way led on to the rim of the crater. Burdened as he was by the girl, Heenan was some hundred yards down the slope when Harris reached the rim. The latter met him before he had covered half the distance.

"I can hear 'em," Tin Can announced, in a whisper. "I know Cusick's there, 'cause I heard some one call his name. I dunno how many they is, but they's quite a bunch. They's a little windlass fixed up on the edge there an' a rope ladder rigged to it that leads down to where they be. We got our rabbits, Bill, but how are we goin' to fry 'em?"

Heenan swung the girl about and carefully set her on her feet. "You stick right here," he instructed her. "Hide back o' one o' these bowlders if yuh hear anybody comin' this way, but don't run away, whatever yuh hear.

Come on, Tin Can!"

"We could lay along the trail an' wait for 'em," Tin Can suggested. "I ain't strong for doin' no circus stunts on a rope ladder over a thousan' feet or so o' cold air ornamented so careless here an' there with sharp, hard rock."

"If Cusick's got that map, I'm goin' to get it an' quick!" Heenan said furiously. "If they got down that rope, so can I, an' once I'm there, I'll take my chances o' shootin' my way out again. I'll be ready an' they won't."

"Go on an' commit suicide," Tin Can said resignedly. "I'll be right along with yuh. Small loss. From the way we done acted yestiddy an' to-day, we ain't real fitten to live nohow. Go right ahead, Bill."

They gained the rim of the crater, and Heenan located the rope ladder hanging to the low windlass. He drew his revolver and carefully eased himself down on the rope.

"Follow me down when the muss starts, Tin Can," he whispered.

"I'll be right on top o' yuh," Harris said, suddenly earnest. "Luck to yuh, Bill. Go get 'em an' I'll clean up the

leavin's if they is any."

Cautiously Heenan let himself down over the great bulge of rock that hid the entrance to the stope below, working with infinite caution to prevent dislodging stones or swinging the ladder in a telltale manner. In spite of his care, a loose pebble was dislodged and rattled down with what seemed to Heenan, hanging to the slender ladder over the dark pit, the roar of a landslide. He heard footsteps on the rock below and the voice of Cusick chiding the old captain for his fears-then the flow of talk as the game was resumed. He drew a deep breath and let himself down a little farther.

He worked his way at length free of the greatest bulge of the rock to where the wall sloped inward, and hung on the ladder, unsupported. He could see the light, now, shining from the entrance to the cave some twenty feet below him. He lowered himself another foot and gasped suddenly, while a shock of pure horror tingled through him. One of the strands of the ladder, chafing on the rough overhang, had parted under the strain of his great weight, and he hung suspended by but the one line. He dared not attempt to climb upward for fear the one rope would not sustain him. If he dropped now, he might strike the projecting ledge that he could make out below in the light that issued from the mouth of the cave. He must continue.

The thought of Tin Can's danger, should he attempt to follow, crossed his mind, but the rope had parted above the spot where the wall sloped inward, and he knew that Tin Can would discover it before he had passed the point where he could still cling to the sloping rock and climb back to safety.

Ashiver with the awful horror of great heights, he continued his descent

until his feet were even with the roof of the stope. He stopped here for a moment, considering whether he should continue his descent slowly and risk being seen before he gained the ledge, or let go and drop for it, taking the risk of losing his balance and plunging to the dark depths far below. The remaining rope, strained beyond its capacity by his weight, decided the matter for him.

He sensed the give to it as the strands began to part on the rough rack above him, and a moment later he fell-fell like a plummet past the lighted mouth of the stope and lit on his hands and knees at the very edge of the narrow ledge. One leg slipped over the edge and he lost a precious fraction of an instant recovering his balance. In that fraction the old captain drew and fired. Heenan felt the wind of the flying lead on his temple and replied to the shot even as it passed. The old captain threw back his head and his gun dropped. As Heenan fired, the Chinaman grabbed the great lamp and hurled it at him. Heenan dodged, and the flaming lamp whirled down into the darkness of the

Its going left Stygian darkness in the cave. The positions of the men, however, were photographed on Heenan's brain, and he made straight for Cusick. His outstretched arms encircled a body, a rough fist spanked hard on his cheek, and then he rolled on the rough rock floor, locked with his old enemy, whom he had driven from the country twenty years before. Cusick was fighting rather to gain his freedom than to kill his adversary, and Heenan was fighting to hold him. His gun had been torn from his hand in the first shock of the encounter, and he clutched for Cusick's hands to determine if he had a weapon. He felt steel-there was a report-a vellow flash close to his cheek.

He twisted the wrist he held with all his strength and felt the fingers open, heard the clank of the metal on the rock as the gun fell. Then the arm was torn loose from his grasp and blows rained on his face. He returned them as best he might, and then suddenly felt in his left shoulder a sensation as of a tiny stream of warm water poured on the bare flesh. Heenan had felt steel before and knew it. He groped desperately for the striking arm, and the withdrawing knife sliced his palm. He made another grab, caught the wrist as the blade descended once more, and, grasping it with the other hand as well, twisted it violently and heard the knife

go the way of the gun.

The cave was a bedlam of echoing Heenan, certain that Cusick and Cusick alone would have possession of the coveted map, battled furiously, intent only on the subjugation of his antagonist, and for the moment unmindful of the others and thoughtless of his manner of escape after he had dealt with Cusick. Over and over they rolled on the rough stone floor of the cave, first one and then the other on top, slugging and straining furiously. Then Heenan, for the moment on his back, flung out one arm and his hand encountered only space. With a thrill of terror he realized that they had rolled out onto the ledge and were fighting on the brink of the abyss. Struggle as desperately as he might, he was forced farther and farther over the edge, until he knew that another two inches would overbalance him.

With a superhuman effort, he squirmed back under Cusick and tossed him toward the threatening brink. He heard Cusick's shrill scream of fright and knew that he was slipping. Intent only on recovering the coveted map, Heenan whirled and grasped his old enemy's coat collar as Cusick slid over the edge. Panting for breath, he knelt and heaved the gambler back to safety, dealing him a mighty blow on the point of the chin as he pulled him back from

death. Cusick grunted and relaxed in Heenan's arms.

Heenan was suddenly conscious that a light had been made, and, dropping Cusick for the moment, he turned toward the cave to face any enemy the light might disclose to him. What he saw caused him to gasp with wonder. The Chinaman, Lee, and the two Swedes were lined up along the wall of the stope, their hands elevated above their heads. Before them stood two other men holding revolvers on the cowed smugglers. The stocky captain lay on the rock floor, nursing a wound in his right shoulder and loudly bemoaning the fate that was shaping his course for another term in the penitentiary.

The men in control of the situation wore uniforms, and Heenan recognized one of them as the captain of the revenue cutter Orca. Then he became dimly aware of a thick rope dangling just beside him, and a body slid down and plumped onto the ledge. He looked up and saw the trapper, Walter McGregor, grinning down at him.

"All right, old man?" McGregor inquired. "I've seen Sadie and she told

me the yarn. You hurt?"

Heenan shook his head and hurriedly searched Cusick's pockets. His face lighted as his questing fingers encountered the map he sought, and he transferred it to his own inside vest pocket.

"Didn't get here a mite too soon, did we?" McGregor rattled on. "You had your nerve with you, tackling this gang alone. What do you think o' my girl, Bill? Ain't she some lady? Huh?"

Heenan blinked. "How'd you get

here?"

"I been trailin' this bunch for two weeks with the U. S. bunch. Guess we've made some clean-up, huh? Too bad to send my future wife's uncle to the pen, but he would be nasty about the weddin'. No other way."

Cusick stirred and groaned. Heenan rose and laughed down at the awaken-

ing man.

"I told yuh twenty years ago to keep out o' this territory, Cusick," he said. "I reckon the old U. S.'ll make yuh do what I say now for a spell. I mebbe can't prove old Shep's killin' on yuh, but you'll do your nice little bit for smugglin', anyhow."

The stubby old captain with the nasal twang raised himself on his elbow and

wailed.

"I had the feelin' in my bones," he moaned. "I had the feelin'. I wonder will they make me a trusty on Mc-Neil's?"

"Go on, Sadie, kiss him good-by," McGregor laughingly urged his bride of an hour, as they stood at the foot of the gangplank of the Seattle-bound steamer at Satka, bidding Harris and Heenan farewell. Harris made a grimace and skipped up the plank to the deck. The blushing, dimpling half-caste girl shyly slid her arms about Heenan's neck and touched her small red lips to his.

"Good-by, my very nice man," she said softly. "You very good, and I think of you often."

Heenan was crimson with embarrass-

"Sure," he stammered. "That's right.

Well, s'long, Walt. Good-by, little girl. Glad I could—could help yuh out."

"My very nice man," Sadie cooed again, as he went up the gangplank.

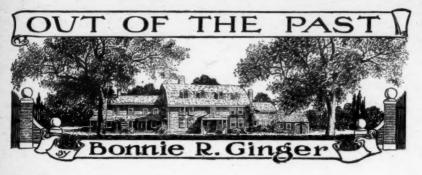
The newly made husband and wife stood on the dock, waving to Heenan and Harris until the steamer plowed out of sight around the bend.

"It's the bunk," Tin Can declared, with a dismal shake of his head. "Don't I know? She'll be splittin' his head with a fryin' pan 'side of a month, an' he'll be sizin' her up an' wonderin' what brand o' eye trouble he was sufferin' from when he thought she was good lookin'. Wives is the bunk, Bill."

There was a far-away look in Heenan's blue eyes. He fingered the precious map in his inner vest pocket, and the look of love and joy in the old prospector's eyes at their last sight of the photograph of his wife and child was clear in his memory. He was a little awed by the marriage ceremony he had so recently witnessed, and the look the bride had given her husband when the minister had pronounced them one haunted his mind like the lingering of an exquisite perfume. He was filled with a great sense of loneliness.

"I never had one," he muttered. His fingers tightened on the rail till the big knuckles stood out white, and a spasm of pain that passed as it came twisted his big face. "God! I never had one!"





ILES' principal trouble was too much college. College is the greatest thing in the world while you're at college—but it's like bathing; you mustn't

stay in too long or there's no reaction. After college there's life to react to, and that is done by forgetting books; and Miles Putney Parkes could as soon have forgotten to put on his clothes in the morning.

He had graduated early, and then had hung about Mrs. A. Mater begging for more degrees like a little Oliver. At twenty-six he had a bad case of enlargement of book learning; only, as there was no one to diagnose it, he didn't know what ailed him. I dread to mention the things Miles did not know, but that was assuredly the reason why he had decided upon being an author, and he had come to the country for a summer of literary labor.

His habitat was ideal. At the end of a long lane between orchard and pasture stood a very old-fashioned brick house with an old-fashioned garden in front and at the rear a high cornfield sloping to the wooded hills. This was the Old Farmhouse, historic by virtue of General Washington's having—of course—once stayed there overnight. It belonged to the John Wilbur Ely lands, and the Pierceys rented it for farming purposes.

Miles was the only boarder. He was a big, well-formed chap, well profiled, with upstanding hair and an outstanding Parkes nose, and in attire he conformed to every formality of summer negligee. Even a tie that cut loose in color failed to compromise him, because eyeglasses chaperoned it and kept it in bounds. On casual sight, one would have been justified in setting him down for a nice, wholesome, honest prig. But Mrs. Piercey was a divining woman, and she saw in this young man something more than book learning or book writing, where you and I would have failed.

"He just needs to know life," she thought, and then sighed because the only sort thereabouts was farm life, and that did not fill the bill.

Nevertheless, he did not despise the lessons of farm life, as he frankly owned one day when he went with her about the barns and outhouses. It was the first time he had ever met domestic animals on their own hearth, and he was as polite to them as if they had been people. He smiled at the pigs and cows and was respectful to the horses that poked their friendly heads out of the stalls beneath the mountains of raftered hay. He was still more respectful to Tommy, the great pedigreed bull who stood sullenly dozing in his own special stall. And on the way to

the house he said suddenly and naïvely: "Mrs. Piercey, I never guessed what a farm was like. You will think I'm a fool—and probably I am!" And that was what she liked—his willingness to admit his ignorance, a thing that the real prig never can do, because that is just why he is a real prig.

As they reached the house, the R. F. D. was just bringing Mrs. Piercey a letter. As it was totally dumfounding in its contents, it is here appended

in full:

MY DEAR MRS. ELY: I will at once say that I am Hester Ely, John Wilbur Ely's daughter. I am trying to understand women's industrial conditions, and think farm life may be the solution of the problem. So I want to know farm life from the ground up. Would you let me come to you to work? I would learn quickly, and of course expect no wages until I merit them. If you will let me come, I will be there in about a week. And may I ask you to tell no one? I don't want even my own family to know yet. I am, yours sincerely,

HESTER ELY.

"If that don't beat all!" mused Mrs. Piercey. "What won't rich girls get into their heads? I'll have to let her come. I do need help, and girls won't work on farms—they all go to the summer hotels; and she'll find that out, too. I can tell her that."

And then she went in and wrote the reply. And when she had written it, she suddenly thought of Miles, the young boarder. If what he wanted was life—well, here was the setting for adventure—the heiress of the farm in disguise as a hired girl! For in the matter of adventure, womanlike she inclined to the romantic, guessing the ignorance of Miles to lie deepest along that line.

Miles, meantime, had gone on to the garden. It was a sunny morning. The bees were humming, from the house came the odor of fruits preserving, and from Miles' pipe came presently the smoke of contentment, as he went authoring to and fro along the tiled walk between the hollyhocks and boxwood.

It was not your popular author he meant to be, but something dignified, and in the historical line. Miles' hobby was the antique, the old. In college he had been a history shark, and most of all he inclined to the colonial. He was an authority on such things as harpsichords and snuffboxes and long pistols, and no one on earth could fool him on old china or mahogany. Judge, then, of the appeal of this old house, with its hewn rafters, its double doors, its steps up and steps down—all the old original structure, in the most complete preservation. It was ideal for his work.

As he walked up and down, he saw a dusty girl come up the lane and open the yard gate. She carried a cheap wicker suit case and looked hot and tired. Mrs. Piercey had just come from the dairy, and Miles overheard the con-

versation.

"Good morning, ma'am," said the dusty girl. "Are you needing any

help?"

"Well," said Mrs. Piercey, "I might be—but I've got a young l—— a girl coming next week. So I guess I can't take you."

"Couldn't you maybe find something I could do till she comes?" asked the dusty one respectfully, but coaxingly.

"But why don't you look for a steady job? If I took you, you'd have to go when the other comes."

"Yes, ma'am, I'd expect to, but I'd be awful glad to stay till then. I'd take small wages."

"But most girls go to the summer hotels."

The dusty one grinned. It was a delightfully knowing grin. "Oh, hotels! Forget it! I've been cashier in a city restaurant. I'm for country life, I am."

This made an impression on Mrs. Piercey. After proper cogitation, she accepted the little vagrant, who emitted a distinctly relieved "Thank you, ma'am!" and followed inside with the wicker case.

Somehow, Miles was relieved himself, the girl had seemed so anxious. He resumed his walking and authoring as if a load had been lifted from his mind, too. Think of carrying a suit case about the country, looking for work!

At dinner—the noon meal—she waited at table. Miles had forgotten about her until he saw a rounded arm coming from behind him and lowering vegetables at his plate. He observed the arm's owner. She was not dusty now; she wore clean, stiff gingham; and she was attending very strictly, even solemnly, to her new task. Mrs. Piercey was very nice to her and called her "Matey" motheringly.

"I guess," she said to Miles, "your room won't look so ontidy now. She's

right handy."

Each part of the day seemed best as he lived it, but somehow the afternoon walk home from the distant beach pleased him most. He was freshened by the swim, his thoughts were free after the morning's work, and he could enjoy the countryside. It was so truly a countryside, with its lanes and fields and stately groves and its pastures dotted with kine. He thought of them as kine. If a coach and four could only have come by, to complete the illusion of the leisured past which so delighted his history-grazing soul!

Alas, the eternal flaw! And so different from coaches and fours! Dozens of times he was honked off the road and down into the weeds, while some dust-raising devil of an automobile sped by, tearing out of the scene its leisuredpast effect like a tooth wrenched from a jaw. He hated those things.

And to-day more than ever. It chanced that the farm dog, Duff, who had taken a fancy to him, had followed him to the beach. As they were coming home, a great speeding car shot by and rolled Duff all over the road, from which he arose in the disguise of a dust

heap, to fill the welkin with anguished wails for a mangled foot and a slain faith in humanity. Miles carried him the rest of the way home, boiling with

rage.

It was Matey, the new girl, who helped him bind Duff's broken foot. Miles was expressing himself rather freely, and from excoriating automobiles he went on to the whole speedmad present, contrasting it very unfavorably with an earlier day when peo-

ple had time to be humane.

Matey finished her first-aid activities and stood up, regarding him thought-fully. But an idea had come to him like a flash that here was matter for an essay—say, on "Mannerless Motorists" or something of that sort—whereby he might publish their shame to the world; and in sudden zeal, he departed for his room to begin the worthy work. Matey patted Duff—who by now rather relished his mishap, it had brought him so much attention—and said to him:

"Duff, I'm not unsympathetic, but tell me honest—wouldn't you rather be run over by an automobile than live before they invented 'em? You can get over a broken foot, but it's not so easy to get over being born a hundred years

too late!"

And Duff actually agreed with her,

the traitor!

Next day Miles was fated to give further proof of his anachronism. Two elderly ladies came up from Laurel Inn to see the farmhouse, and, as he knew them slightly, he took them about, springing his treasures of carving, raftering, tiling, double-dooring, and all the old-fashionedness in general, and inciting them to the wildest of elderly lady ecstasies. Oh, the dear, darling old place! Oh, the wonderful bit of the real old past! And how adorable of the dear Elys to preserve it thus, instead of turning it into a modern model farm! Most of all they raved about the kitchen, where Mrs. Piercey and Matey were

making jelly. Matey stared after them, but Mrs. Piercey was indifferent.

"Folks like them are always coming here to see the farm. They go crazy about anything that's old and inconvenient. If they had the work to do, they'd wish it was modern, I guess."

"But the young man-he's worse than

they are!" said Matey.

"He's very highly educated," said Mrs. Piercey. "His books have made him like that."

"I thought books were to help peo-

ple," said Matey.

"Matey," said Mrs. Piercey, "you mustn't discuss the boarders with your employer. Maybe in the restaurant it was the custom, but this is different. I tel! you for your own good."

"Yes'm," said Matey meekly.

A little later she had an errand to Miles' room with towels and a huge pitcher of water. He was there, writing, and when he saw the pitcher, he got up and took it from her.

"You mustn't carry things as heavy

as that," he said.

Her amazing reply was a suddenly doubled-up arm, and the calm order:

"Feel my muscle."

He flushed and hesitated, but she did not remove her arm. He fumbled with his fingers over a very creditable muscle, and she nodded. Then she touched her forehead.

"Your muscle's there, isn't it?" she said. "I know; you write." And in reverent tones, she added: "Is it a love

story?"

He coughed. Why did he feel guilty all of a sudden because it was not a love story? He assumed a reproving dignity, whereat she looked disap-

pointed.

"G'wan!" she said slowly. Then, in another tone, triumphant: "G'wan! Of course it's a love story! But I'm not prying, you know. I happen to know some writers—they come to the restaurant. Charley Roantrotter—know him?

Novelettes, he calls his. I don't blame you for not telling; even Charley says it gets on his conscience sometimes. But how can you write love stories without you know all about love? So he says he's not to blame. It's for truth in fiction; he doesn't do it just to flirt. He suffers a lot sometimes from his conscience. He calls 'em 'episodes.'"

Miles blushed redder than before, and

at once took on great dignity.

"I'm engaged upon something historical," he said, with emphasis.

Immediately he wished he hadn't said that, she looked so disillusioned. He felt that he had fallen in her estimation—an unexpectedly unpleasant sensation. But again she laughed triumphantly, knowingly.

"You think I believe that? You write history? And you tell that to a girl that's been cashier in a restaurant? Aw, you can't fool me!"

Now, he was both flattered by her mistaking him for a sort of Don Juan, and also painfully conscious how terribly it was a mistake. Episode? Why, he had but to peep into his past life to find it as bare of episodes as the old woman's cupboard was bare of bones.

Once, it was true, there had been some one—in his college days—— But she had liked some one else. Then, in Marblehead one summer—— But it had stopped short, somehow. Even now there was a Miss Topping, with whom he corresponded. But none of these was the real thing. And why was this? He had imagined episodes, but he had never had them. And why?

Of course, he snubbed Matey after that, but after that she did not ask him any more questions. She went about her work absorbedly, and if sometimes she was inquisitive, she repressed the impulse. Mrs. Piercey had taken a great fancy to her, and was the more gratified because that odd young person, Hester Ely, had written that she would be delayed for another week, and

meantime a hired girl was useful. In fact, had she not got that notion of adventure for Miles, she would have preferred to keep Matey and not bother

with heiresses who had fads.

She might have felt differently had she known how Miles had begun to watch the little cashier. She was always in his subconsciousness, and for all her businesslikeness, something in her was always beckoning him, compelling him to watch her, though he did not think her particularly pretty. Again, he could not forget that flattering mistake of hers, which she continued to make apparently, for her glance continued to say: "Ah, you writers! You can't fool me!" And somehow he did not want to fool her, or, rather, he did want to-he wanted her to believe him one of "those writers," those fellows who had episodes.

Once she came upon him reading

Shakespeare.

"There!" she cried. "He was one of 'em! Charley Roantrotter told me all about him. He wrote sonnets! Charley says he must have had a million episodes, to write those sonnets."

"He could have done it from obser-

vation," said Miles.

"Ah, that's what I said to Charley, but he said no, it wouldn't have been convincing that way."

"Don't believe everything Mr. Roantrotter tells you," said Miles testily.

However, immediately after that incident, he purposely forgot to mail a letter addressed to Miss Topping, and it lay on his table a whole day; and he put out on his bureau some snapshots of his girl cousins in Massachusetts. The cousins were but two, but the pretty one, Clara, was one of these versatile people, and taken while canoeing and riding and in evening dress, she passed easily for three different girls. Matey, who attended to his room, simply had to see them.

One afternoon Miles did not go down

to the beach. There was no reason for this, therefore he invented one, and walked in the garden composing a chapter. Presently he saw Matey carrying pails to the piggery, and he went after her and relieved her of the burden. From the piggery they went to the barn, and Matey must stop to talk to Tommy, the bull.

"Too bad, Tommy! Tied by the nose to last year's grass, and this year's out there for the picking! It's a shame!"

"I'm glad he's tied," said Miles de-"I don't like his eye. It's sinvoutly. ister.'

"Well, it ought to be," she retorted. "Wouldn't yours be, in his place? Think of his fine strength all pent up in this little stall! He was made for freedom-for standing on a hill and proudly ruling the landscape. Think of being glorious and strong and ornamental-of having the power to dominate-and then being cooped up like a hermit! No, not a hermit. coop themselves up-who's sorry for them? To have strength, big, fine, masculine strength, and then go off into a retreat, when the world needs strength -- " She stopped, and looked sideways up at him.

"I'm glad he's tied," Miles reiter-

ated. She lowered her gaze.

On the way to the house, she became suddenly humble and bashfully suppliant, as one who realizes one's own temerity. Would it be too cheeky altogether if she-that is, if she asked him to read her something he had written? She had so few chances to learn things. It would make her so proud.

Now, he was dying for just this thing. Laughing modestly, but inwardly delighted, he said he didn't mind-and he went to his room and brought down the essay on "Mannerless Motorists." He read it to her while she shelled peas.

In that essay few crimes and despicabilities were not laid to the wheels of automobiles. It was a short article, but it left little unsaid. Relishingly he rolled off such phrases as "the man in the road," the "me-and-thee class," the "divine right of way," the "leaners-back-at-ease, while an intimidated humanity slinks into the dust of the road-side as the slaves of Egypt slunk from the gilded car of Cleopatra." He contrasted the "snarling or snapping horn" with the silver bugle of the gentle days of knighthood, and he closed the final peroration with a quotation from Henry Esmond:

"I have seen too much of success in life to take off my hat and huzzah to it as it passes in its gilded coach, and would do my little part with my neighbors on foot, that they should not gape with too much wonder, nor applaud too loudly."

Matey listened in silence, her head down. When he ended, she said: "Ah, such wonderful language! How much you know!"

"No," he denied modestly. "No, Matey, not at all. Indeed, the very opposite." But he was glowing with pride. Besides, he liked the essay.

She finished her task and stood up suddenly. "Do you know, I've got three hours off this afternoon? I'm going somewhere."

"Where?" he asked eagerly.

"I don't know. I'd like to see some moving pictures. They have good ones at Jake's Landing."

"Will you let me take you?" he asked. "Oh—— Do you mean that?"

"Of course. Why not?"

She beamed gratitude, and ran away, reappearing almost at once in a fresh white dress. They rowed across the river to Jake's Landing and the movie theater.

Mrs. Piercey saw them go. She mused upon the incident.

"She's a taking little piece. But she's honest, if she has seen the world. Surely she wouldn't take advantage of him?" But she wished that Hester Ely would come if she meant to come at all.

There was no use putting an adventure in peril.

As you know, the movies are not subtle. The program was romantic. The longest film was a colonial romance, with silken dames and satin bucks, long pistols, and, of course, an abduction and a duel, with the final love scene and the lovers' last long kiss as the film darkened and went out.

Matey sat close against him, in the twilight of the theater. And some one came out and sang an illustrated song:

"If Somebody thinks I am passingly fair, If Somebody thinks I have kisses to spare, If Somebody's thinking of me somewhere, Oh, if Somebody loves me, what do I care?"

The audience joined in the chorus. Matey sang, and Miles himself essayed it the last time.

The journey back across the river was slow. She dabbled in the water, and hummed the chorus of the song. When he helped her from the boat, he held her hand just an instant—until she drew it away, laughing a little. He laughed, too.

At supper he watched her all the time. She was a dozen Mateys, bewildering him to distraction. But in the eyes of Mrs. Piercey, who observed her, she was just one Matey—a new and obviously wicked, flirting little Matey, taking advantage of a perfectly innocent, unprotected young man. Mrs. Piercey was a wise woman, and said nothing, but she kept Matey very, very busy all the rest of the evening, while Miles hung about, smoking and looking indifferent and casual.

But much later, when her work was done and the rest of the farm was in bed, Matey went to the piano and picked out the illustrated song, and Miles came and stood beside lær, looking down at her while his heart rapped out a tattoo against the author's notebook in his vest

"If Somebody's thinking of me somewhere, Oh, if Somebody loves me, what do I care?"

Her voice was alluring. So was the look she cast up at him sideways.

Before he knew he was going to do it, or could do it, he had seized her and lifted her right up and had kissed her wildly, time after time, while she fought in his clasp.

With the aid of her excellent muscle,

she got free.

"You puppy! You great, big, overgrown, ignorant puppy! I despise you!" And she sailed from the room.

I know that he should have despised himself, and I am embarrassed to say that he did not. But "puppy" is not a nice word, is it? "Cad" he could have borne-it is at least adult-and "brute" he would even have relished-but

"puppy"!

Ah, that was it—his pride had been wounded just when he had been so sure he was being episodic! How could he have expected her to be so angry, she who had seemed to expect such things from writers? A few mere kisses-he tried to be blase and think them mere, but they tingled in his memory-why, that Roantrotter chap must have done as much as that. Why had she been so furious? Unless, indeed, she had not thought him one of "those writers," unless she had been laughing at him, had not thought he would dare to do-what he had done. Ah, it was unbearable! Of course, no real contrition could be born of this state of mind; he was just thrown on the defensive, and blamed her for being angry.

Of course, that did not mean that he was not going to apologize. But it was not so easy as he fancied. She avoided him a whole day, coolly and scornfully. He was driven to follow her about, and he did not relish that. At last he waylaid her and said his little speech, but it only swaggered and sounded hollow and caddish. She heard him through in silence.

"Very well," she said calmly. "But are you aware that you haven't apologized to me? You've apologized to your ancestors-for kissing a hired girl, a cashier. All right, they'll forgive you. They know it's not a habit-and you've had experience and gained material. So you come out ahead. Let it go at that."

"Matey!" he cried, flushing scarlet, but she left him without another word.

And thereafter she was coldly dignified, and he kept as aloof as she. Mrs. Piercey perceived the condition of things, and wondered. She saw that Miles swaggered in demeanor, and grew gloomy in spirits. She saw, too, that presently the swagger began to fade, and that he began to look at Matey wistfully and then humbly-when he thought Matey would not see. And then when he knew she would see. In short-

In short, Miles was a fellow with a conscience, and without experience. It never occurred to him that Matey had tantalized him. He had not expected her to be angry, but what he had done he believed he had done volitionally. He could see now how he had been a puppy, to take advantage of a cashier just because she was a cashier and had notions about writers. She was a good girl, and a man of the world would not have made the blunder. But you can't go up and own all in one minute that you have failed to be a man of the world. He absented himself at the beach for two afternoons.

Matey, meantime, abruptly discontinued her dignified rôle, and entered upon a deliberate system of persecution. She made fun of his historical hobby. and when people came to see the farmhouse, she burlesqued them afterward, and in his presence took to saying: "Gadzooks!" and "Zounds!" And she would ask him in an undertone whether "Lord Chippendale would have more tea," or, "Another potato, Sir Periwig?" or, "Gravy, Squire Highboy?" and

would laugh maliciously when he

flushed and looked pained.

Mrs. Piercey had been holding off because Hester Ely was at last coming in a day or so; indeed, just when she was feeling unable to keep silent, a telegram set the morrow as the date of that eccentric young person's arrival. And immensely relieved, Mrs. Piercey mentioned the matter at table.

"I'll be sorry to lose Matey," she partly fibbed—only partly, though—for in spite of everything, she did like the little cashier—"but the new girl's coming. This is Matey's last day."

The result of this news was that Miles did not finish his meal. Mrs. Piercey became very thoughtful, and

remained in that condition.

Other things than Mrs. Piercey's thoughtfulness happened that day. First, there was the automobile.

It was a huge red car that sped up the lane and halted with a flourish at the gate. Matey darted out and greeted the driver, and they talked and laughed —particularly they laughed. Miles, pacing in the garden, heard that joyous laughter, and bit his pipestem. Then Matey ran to the house, and he heard her saying to Mrs. Piercey:

"It's a friend of mine, a chauffeur.

Can I go for a little ride?"

In another moment the car had sped down the lane, carrying her with it and leaving behind it for Miles' contemplation the cloud of its mannerless dust.

It seemed ages before that car re-

turned.

Matey was radiant at supper. Miles sat gloomy and silent, and Mrs. Piercey was grieved for him and very annoyed with Matey. She even scolded Matey about some domestic mistake, a thing she had never done or had to do before. But Matey gradually subsided of her own accord, and when her work was finished, she went into the garden and sat there alone.

And there Miles found her.

Every one had gone to bed, and everything except the moon and the honeysuckle, both of which were working overtime. Matey was sitting quite dejected, staring up at the sky with wistful eyes.

Then he made his real apology. He owned to everything, even to being a puppy, and having thus recommended himself, he told her—in goodness knows what words, if any—that he loved her

and wanted to marry her.

It might or might not have been that, when he first spoke, she turned and gave him a look of triumph—but it was too swift to be sure about. She kept her face from him till he finished, and was silent a long time. Then she shook her head dejectedly.

"No. You can't do it. You can't marry me. You'll forget me when I've gone, and that's what you ought to do. You can't marry a cashier. You know that, and so do I." And she stood up, shaking her head. But still she looked

at him questioningly.

Whether it was the moonlight or not—anyhow, she was such a different Matey that he was afraid of her. He felt so unworthy, and she seemed so ethereal and remote—he was just afraid. And while he was being afraid and tongue-tied, she turned away and slipped from the garden.

Miles did not sleep that night. He ought not to have slept. If he could have slept, even for a moment, I should not care enough about him to narrate his history. But now I have to narrate something about Mrs. Piercey. I don't know what she had done overnight, but next morning her attitude was absolutely reversed. She had asked herself who was she to set up an heiress if a cashier was what was meant? So she waited on Miles when he came down late to breakfast, and engaged him in conversation-or, rather, she monologued while he ate-or did not eat-his toast and coffee.

"A bright little thing, Matey, ain't she? With a little schooling, she'd shine with the best of them. And if some one cared—— Of course, she's sassy and independent, but she's sweet-dispositioned, too. Lots of girls are sassy till they're mastered by some one they like. It's queer, but it's just a woman's nature to want to be mastered."

And then she hunted up Matey, and told her she guessed she might stay

on at the farm.

Matey flung her arms about her, and cried a little. "Oh, it's just your kind-heartedness—but I can't stay. I'm lone-some for the city. I'm going back."

And then and there Mrs. Piercey's faith in hired girls died forever. She wished Hester Ely joy of her experiment with working girls and farms.

Matey was leaving about noon. Midmorning she had an errand down the road and Miles saw her go, pink-ginghamed, across the pasture. He walked up and down the lane, awaiting her return.

There was nothing about him to indicate openly that he was not the Miles we have known until now. But he was no more that Miles than he was you or I.

A word had done it—or had consummated it. That word was—"mastered." A woman wants to be mastered. Then, why is a man? Well, to master her. Miles the Male was born.

It was Miles the Male who walked that lane, waiting for his prey. And from the height of his sudden master-fulness, he looked down on that former Miles, and jeered. Of course, she had refused that Miles. He respected her for it—that simple, tongued-tied worm! How he must have looked, tremblingly acquiescing when she said he couldn't marry a cashier! But now!

This nature instinct of domination, this absolute intention of having his own way—and his own mate—had come with all the force of things delayed and pent. Now, free, it wanted obstacles to wreck, foes to slay. This chap in the neat negligees was, inside of his skin, a sudden-born cave man, thirsting for combat and proof by brute strength. He would have liked to win her away from bone-crushed, jaw-broken rivals, and then in his lair conquer her till she came trembling and owned herself his mate. So he stood, club in hand—figuratively saying—on his mound, daring the powers to take her from him this time. This attitude was absolutely sincere.

At that moment another male was breaking bonds and coming forth to do and dare. From the barn door stepped Tommy, the bull. His head was raised, his angry nostrils scented the world from which they had shut him and his strength so long. Very well, let them try to keep him from it He wanted them to try; he wanted to prove his swift limbs, his horns, his mighty neck. Let that force which had pent him up come now and meet his force-for this time he meant to annihilate it, so that it would nevermore conquer him. He would own that world of his, and roam it free, and be its ruler. He stood on a little hillock and dominated the scene, rolling his red eyes.

Ah, there it came! A brightness and a swiftness, the symbol of his servitude! That brightness had come to him in that prison there, offering him bits of plucked clover, stolen from the world of clover that was his!

He strode to meet it and kill it.

From another angle Miles had glimpsed the pink gingham just setting across the pasture on its return. In his intention of capturing it and dragging it to his lair, he did not even stop to put back the pasture gate, but left it open, as he made for Matey, his prey.

And then he saw Tommy.

She saw Tommy at the same time, Heaven save her! At first she was not frightened. He shouted some terrible sound, and she faltered, and then began to walk fast, straight toward him. And Tommy snorted and lifted his great head and bellowed. Matey ran.

"My God!" muttered Miles.

Tommy broke into a run. There was not even a tree.

Mrs. Piercey had seen, and was running, screaming.

"Run!" shouted Miles to the pink

gingham.

Matey had reached him. He jerked off his coat, with the command to her, "Run!" He backed, protecting her from the charging bull. She did not run; she stopped short.

He flung around on her. She shook her head. She was chalk white.

Tommy was so near that his lowered horns showed like the brackets of a shelf. He was coming like the day of doom.

The air was rent by the blast of something loud and brazen. Across the pasture plunged a great red motor car, speeding right toward them like a lurid streak. It was upon them. Tommy saw it—the red thing, the brighter brightness, the swifter swiftness, and he knew it was the force.

It slowed and some one leaped from it even as Tommy charged it. Then Tommy had locked horns with it.

Three humans made their escape while Tommy demolished the red car.

Came Mr. Piercey and the hands with weapons of conquest—and Tommy was conquered once more by the force just when he had thought to slay it. Tommy, you do not understand this thing. You never will.

Mrs. Piercey was the only one who fainted outright. Matey lay sobbing on the grass of the lane; then she got up and laughed hysterically.

The man who had jumped from the

red car also laughed hysterically.

"Well, Hester—good-by to your car!"

"Yes," sobbed and laughed Matey.

"Hester?" cried Mrs. Piercey, just then come to. "Are you Hester Ely?"

"Yes, Mrs. Piercey!" She sobbed one more sob, a humble one, and then pulled herself together. "You aren't angry? I was afraid you wouldn't want me to come, so I—I sneaked. This is Mr. Roantrotter."

"Well for the lands' sakes!" gasped

Mrs. Piercey.

"That was your car?" asked Miles chokingly. She nodded.

They went to the house.

Except Miles. He stole away to the garden. He was not the dominant male now. Matey was an heiress. There are foes, oh, new-born cave man, that you cannot conquer. So Miles knew, just as Tommy knew, tied once more in his prison stall.

Came a little draggled pink gingham dress to the garden, and put its hand on his arm.

"Miles?" This was said shyly.

"Yes?" said the undominant male.

"You risked your life for me!"

"So did-Roantrotter."

"No, he just risked a car—that wasn't his."

Miles flung around, his eyes lighting as something flashed into his memory.

"And you—you wouldn't run when I told you to. You stayed by me. Why did you do that?"

She was naturally confused. He seized her.

"You shall be my wife if you're a dozen heiresses!" he said, just like that, into her flushing, laughing face. And he kissed her.

With that kiss Miles was reborn, and this time into the twentieth century. And his advice to undominant males who prefer books to life and the past to the present is, I take it: "Patronize your own home century. Come on in. It's fine!"

As for working girls and farms—you must ask Matey about that.



Find the Woman. You will find her in almost every generation, in almost every country, in almost every big city—the super-woman. She is not the typical adventuress; she is not a genius. The reason for her strange power is occult. When philosophers have thought they had segregated the cause—the formula—what you will—in one particular super-woman or group of super-women, straightway some new member of the clan has arisen who wields equal power with her notable sisters, but who possesses none of the traits that made them irresistible. And the seekers of formulas are again at sea. What makes the super-woman? Is it beauty? Cleopatra and Rachel were homely. Is it daintiness? Marguerite de Valois washed her hands but twice a week. Is it wit? Pompadour and Du Barry were avowedly stupid in conversation. Is it youth? Diane de Poictiers and Ninon de l'Enclos were wildly adored at sixty. Is it the subtle quality of feminism? George Sand, who numbered her admirers by the score—poor Chopin in their foremost rank—was not only ugly, but disgustingly mannish. So was Semiramis. The nameless charm is found almost as often in the masculine, "advanced" woman as in the delicate, ultraleminine damsel. Here are the stories of super-women who conquered at will. Some of them smashed thrones; some were content with wholesale heartsmashing. Wherein lay their secret? Or rather, their secrets? For seldom did any two of them follow the same plan of campaign.

## MARIE DE CHEVREUSE Archconspirator and Siren



P a twisting pass of the Pyrenees, one late afternoon in 1628, a woman flogged her worn-out horse. The steed was dead beat from long and

merciless riding. His rider's light weight was counteracted by the heavy portmanteau slung over the saddlebow.

One might have expected the fugitive to remove this handicap to her flight by tossing away the extra weight. But she was a woman, a strikingly beautiful woman, and in that bulky portmanteau were many pretty clothes. Even in dire peril Marie de Chevreuse ever sought to look her best. So the portmanteau remained where it was.

Glancing back as she rounded a turn of the rock-lined path, Marie caught a glimpse of the plain below. It was dotted with a troop of cavalry, strung out and scattered, but riding like mad; the cavalry troop that had pursued her all the way from Paris, and that now—thanks to the fact that her preceding relay horse had gone dead lame—were fast overhauling her.

Could she hold her lead until the Pyrenees should lie behind her, she would be safe, for, once in Spain, she would be beyond French jurisdiction. But many miles intervened; the cavalry were gaining at every stride; her horse was giving out; the farther reaches of the pass ahead were the haunts of highwaymen and organized banditti. Altogether, the most inveterate gambler would have hesitated to play a twenty-

cape into Spain.

The fugitive dismounted and led her horse into a gap between two bowlders. Five minutes later, the same horse reappeared on the pass, but no longer ridden by a tired, white-faced woman. Instead, the heaving brute was bestridden by a handsome young cavalier, bronzed of visage, mustached, and boyishly fierce of aspect.

In a minute or so the cavalier drew rein before a mountain inn and shouted loudly for landlord and hostler. most directly afterward, up galloped the first riders of the cavalry troop. They entered the inn kitchen and demanded news of a woman who, they were certain, had passed during the last hour

A man, eating at the kitchen table, lifted his head, annoyed at the rude interruption, and swore roundly at the troopers for breaking in upon his meal. When the captain of the troop replied in kind, the young diner jumped to his feet, kicking over the table, and flashed out the sword he wore.

The landlord and some of the servants frantically intervened to avert a tavern brawl. When the captain explained that the woman he sought was the notorious Duchess de Chevreuse, the young cavalier sheathed his sword, tendered a thousand apologies for his display of temper, and begged leave to join in the hunt. He, too, he declared, had a grudge against the fair Marie, for she had once jilted him and wrecked his life.

The captain willingly accepted the service of the new recruit. As soon as the horses were rested, the pursuit pushed on. The presence of the soldiers kept the lurking banditti out of As the Spanish frontier was sight. reached, the cavalier managed to slip away from the troop under cover of darkness. They never saw him again.

Marie de Chevreuse had escaped with

to-one chance on Marie's ultimate es- perfect safety into Spain. The heavy portmanteau had served an excellent

> This was but one of Marie's countless exploits, in which her wits saved her from the fatal results of her political crimes.

> A charming oval face, complexion of dazzling fairness, large and expressive blue eyes, a wealth of glossy auburn hair. Few fairer women have graced the court of France. Gayety and vivacity of manner gave her whole personality an irresistible charm.

> So writes one biographer. And another says of the same woman:

She was the archeonspirator among all fair women. For more than thirty years she was one of the chief factors in French poli-

You have read Dumas' "Three Guardsmen," of course-and "Twenty Years After." Then you will recall her. She flits through both books -elusive, scarce seen, all-powerful, wholly charming, the sweetheart of Aramis, the mother of Raoul de Bragelonne.

She was christened Marie de Rohan. History and fiction alike know her as Madame de Chevreuse. She deserves a niche of her own in the hall of superwomen; not only because of her myriad conquests, but because she, almost alone among the annals of her class, seldom loved any man without helping him along in the world, instead of dragging him down or cracking his finances. Indeed, practically all of her plotting, which shook France to its foundations, was done for the advancement of the men she loved.

The Rohans were the greatest of France's old princely families. In their own land of Brittany they ruled almost as monarchs. Wealth and pride of ancestry were their birthrights. The family's motto, blazoned in antique French beneath their escutcheon, ran:

Roy ne puys, duc ne daigne, Rohan suys. (King I may not be, duke I will not be, Rohan I am!)

Marie's father, Hercule de Rohan, Duke of Montbazon—you see, despite the motto, they had by this time condescended to be dukes—had enough court influence to secure his daughter's appointment at fifteen as one of the French queen's maids of honor.

The queen was Anne of Austria, the Spanish woman who married spineless, sulky Louis XIII. of France. Louis proceeded, soon after the wedding, to fall in love with Marie. The queen was not precisely pleased, and a row royal ensued that threatened to toss the luckless maid of honor from her post at court. But Marie managed to convince Anne that she had no ambition to become a brevet queen. And henceforth, for life, the two women were inseparable friends.

Louis was forever under the domination of some stronger mind. He was a cipher who needed some significant figure in front of him in order to amount to anything. And the first of his "managers" was one Albert de Luynes, who chanced to interest him in athletics, and who, during the process, gained such a hold over Louis' weak mind as to be made a duke and one of the chief officials of the kingdom.

Louis could refuse De Luynes nothing, not even the hand of Marie de Rohan. And when the girl was sixteen and De Luynes forty, they were

married.

Marie was already the chief beauty of the court, and a half dozen bloody duels had been fought over her. Now, a bride of sixteen, she committed an indiscretion whose gross unusualness made her, for the time, the wonder and laughingstock of Paris. She fell desperately and exclusively in love with her own husband.

She used her influence with the queen to strengthen De Luynes' position with the king, and to gain new honors for the already puissant favorite. She and her husband were sublimely happy together, and De Luynes' heretofore catholic fancy centered itself solely upon Marie.

Then, when the young wife was but twenty, her husband died. Marie mourned him bitterly. For a space she retired from court and talked of taking the veil.

But those were not the days—nor was Marie's the nature—for prolonged periods of mourning. Moreover, the girl widow's all-compelling charm and beauty kept her besieged with suitors. And out of the sighing swarm, she chose a new husband—the Duke of Chevreuse, son of "Belafré," Duke of Guise, whom Henry III. had murdered but a few years before. Marie and De Chevreuse were married but a little less than a year after De Luynes' death. And henceforth history was to know the bride as Madame de Chevreuse.

Her new husband loved her, but he loved too many other women as well. He was dissolute, a spendthrift, pleasantly worthless. It is not on record that Marie had cared overmuch for him from the first. It is certain she soon tired of him. De Luynes—briefly as she had mourned him—was the chief

love of her life.

And now began Marie's real career as a heartbreaker.

To France came an Englishman of high rank—Henry Rich, first Earl of Holland—on an embassy to seek the hand of Henrietta Maria, the French king's sister, in marriage to the Prince of Wales, afterward Charles I. of England.

It was a delicate and a doubtful mission, for Anne of Austria fiercely opposed the match; and at this time—though never in after years—she had strong influence with her husband. Most people had.

It was Holland's task to smooth away all this opposition and arrange the match; a task whose fulfillment would mean high honors for him in England, and whose failure might well mean loss of royal favor. And the mission seemed foredoomed to failure.

Holland was strikingly handsome, despite the fact that he wore long earrings which dangled almost to his shoulders. He had, too, powers of persuasion and of magnetism that a spellbinder would sell half his voice for. Which was why he had been chosen for this difficult errand to France.

At the French court he met Marie de Chevreuse. He fell in love with her and she with him. Just how much Holland's adoration was tinged by the knowledge that Marie was the queen's bosom friend, there is no sense in asking. He had a cold, calculating streak in him, this early ambassador. But he had a volcanic heart, too, and the heart was Marie's.

Marie, longing to be of practical use to her sweetheart, hammered away at Anne's opposition to the royal match. But she found that the queen could not be shaken in her distaste for the scheme. Another woman, or one who loved less, might have given up all hope. Marie was different. She was not the type of woman who hammers her knuckles raw beating at one locked door before making quite certain that no other door is unlocked.

She had seen, in nurseries, children who squallingly refused to give up some toy until, their attention drawn by some newer bauble, they let the former prize drop unnoted from their pudgy fingers. And, going on the theory that grown folk are but children raised to the nth power, she tried the same ruse on Anne.

The Duke of Buckingham came to France on a mission of state, and Marie succeeded in making the queen so absorbingly interested in Buckingham as to have eyes and ears for nothing else. Born conspirator that she was, she created for Anne such a complex intrigue rôle in the Buckingham drama that all

the queen could do was to remember her lines. She had no further leisure or thought for the Henrietta Maria affair.

And, having silenced the enemy's guns, Marie managed to win irresolute Louis over to the marriage of his sister to the English Prince of Wales. The match went through in triumph, to Holland's infinite advantage at home. All that Marie got out of it was the knowledge that she had helped her lover and the joy that a born plotter feels in a conspiracy's success.

Her next love affair was more tragic, and it started the lifelong war between herself and the French government. De Luynes' place as King Louis' master mind had lately been taken by a cadaverous little consumptive with a brain and spirit many sizes too big for his meager, scarlet-clad body, namely, Jean du Plessis, Cardinal—and Duke—of Richelieu, an ex-priest who had become prime minister of France, and who for many years to come was France.

We have met Richelieu before—in the Ninon de l'Enclos story, where we sketched his reasons for hating Anne of Austria and for seeking her destruction. Richelieu now turned a favoring eye on Marie, but she was Anne's dearest friend and hated Anne's persecutor. To all Richelieu's open admiration she returned not only a frigid indifference, but a positive dislike.

This dislike deepened soon into a yearning to ruin the cardinal; for she fell in love with one of Richelieu's bitterest foes. Loyalty to Anne had merely made Marie deaf to Richelieu's pleas; loyalty to her new lover made her long to destroy his eminence. Which perhaps was the "woman of it"; perhaps not.

The man who had just captured Marie's resilient heart and who loved her to distraction was Henry de Talleyrand, Count of Chalais. Henry's love for Marie led to his death. Her love

for him turned her into a perpetual conspirator against the government.

Here is the story:

Richelieu, as ruler of France and of France's king, sought to arrange a marriage between Louis' younger brother, the Duke of Orleans, and an heiress of rank. A plot was formed to prevent this match. The chief plotter was Anne herself, who forever tried to snarl Richelieu's schemes. Her two foremost aids were Marie and the Count of Chalais. They approached Orleans with an odd proposition-namely, that Louis was childless and an invalid and would probably die before long, and that if Orleans would refuse the wife picked out for him, Anne herself would marry him as soon as her husband did her the favor to die.

Orleans consented to the proposal and refused to marry the heiress. Richelieu, through Louis, put on the pressure to an unbearable extent to force Orleans into the match. Orleans, as weak as Louis himself, wavered. new move was due-and quickly duefrom the conspirators. And the move they hit on was a favorite one in those and later days. They decided to get the cardinal out of the way for good and all, and they laid their plans accordingly. It was like a bevy of rabbits deciding to corner and slay a rattlesnake. The cleverest of the conspirators could not sensibly have hoped for a moment to vie with Richelieu in a war of intellect.

Just as the plot was ripe, Richelieu whose spies had kept him thoroughly posted—made public the whole "conspiracy against his person and the in-

trigue against the state."

King Louis was not wholly pleased at his wife's promise to marry again the moment he should be dead, so he gave Richelieu a free hand in doling out punishment. Anne escaped with a sort of "honorable imprisonment." Marie—probably because of Richelieu's infat-

uation for her—got off, for the time, scot-free. But a score of others were thrown into prison or beheaded.

Chalais was captured at Nantes, as he sought to escape, was tried, and was condemned to death. Marie was frantic. She appealed to Richelieu; to meet a grimly smiling refusal to spare the count. She knelt to Louis; the king recalled her share in picking out a new husband for his wife—and refused to stir hand or foot to save her lover.

Next, Marie flew to Nantes, killing horses all along the road by riding out their lives. Arriving there on the eve of the execution, she hit on a truly remarkable ruse to prevent, or, at least, delay, Chalais' death. She was enormously rich, and she spent the bulk of her available fortune in bribing every professional or amateur executioner, within a radius of twenty miles, to go at once into hiding. Meantime, she worked with her remaining ready cash as a lever to pry Chalais out of prison.

It seems there is a knack of some sort in cutting off heads, and that every novice cannot do it gracefully. Also, an especial kind of ax is preferred. Great was the official consternation, then—Chalais being led forth to the scaffold—when no executioner could be found, and not only no executioner, but no headsman's ax. The runaway man-killers had, at Marie's request, taken their gruesome weapons along with them.

No ax, no axman—and the victim waiting, white but calm, on the scaffold, a beautiful woman clinging to him. Volunteer executioners were called for from the assembled crowd. No one cared to tackle the job. The governor of Nantes, in desperation, made proclamation that he would pay a huge sum to any man in the waiting throng of onlookers who would come forward and cut off the doomed head of Monsieur le Comte de Chalais.

Marie had not been able to bribe all France, yet perhaps the sight of the brave, lovely girl whose arms were about the victim's neck kept even the most avaricious and poor in the gathering from volunteering. Marie began to think her bribes had saved the day, and she smiled up in gay encouragement at Chalais.

But the irate governor—he was the man she should have bribed—was not at the end of his lethal resources. He sent to the prison, had a condemned criminal brought before him, and offered the man life, money, and freedom if he would kill Chalais. The temptation was not to be resisted. The prisoner consented.

The only available weapon that resembled an ax was a carpenter's blunt adze. Armed with this, the impromptu excutioner mounted the scaffold. Chalais was forced by the guards to lay his head on the concave block. Marie fainted—which was lucky. For, while she was mercifully unconscious, the amateur headsman severed her lover's neck—with no less than thirty bungling strokes of the adze.

Marie went back to Paris in heartbroken rage, vowing vengeance on Richelieu and on Louis and on every one else for her lover's death. Madly she sought to stir up a new conspiracy against the cardinal. But he forestalled her. Realizing that Marie's wit and beauty and her implacable hatred for himself would make her a far too potent conspirator to leave at large in Paris, Richelieu banished her.

But he still felt an afterglow of the old infatuation. Instead of ordering her out of France, he permitted her to retire to an estate of hers at Dampierre. And straightway Dampierre bloomed into a conspiracy center, with "underground" means of communication between it and the disaffected at Paris.

Repenting his unaccustomed leniency, and listing Marie forevermore in the roster of his and Louis' unreconcilable foes, Richeljeu sent a peremptory order, banishing the archeonspirator from France.

She sought asylum in Lorraine; not because it was the most convenient and pleasant place of exile, but to further a newer and bigger conspiracy she had hatched against Richelieu. It was child's play for her to make the powerful Duke of Lorraine her helpless adorer and to render his mind as plastic as hot wax in her hands.

She played on the duke's political ambitions, persuading him to become prime mover in an alliance—with England, Savoy, Venice, and other greater or lesser states—against France. Thereby, she stirred up a very pretty international quarrel, and speedily France had a fine new war on its hands—thanks to the girl who hated its prime minister for killing her lover.

But Richelieu was not to be punished in this way. As great a soldier as a statesman, he repulsed a British invasion, captured Rochelle after a memorable siege, and routed the well-planned alliance. Though the Duke of Lorraine, for a time at least, profited vastly thereby.

Believing that Marie was less dangerous at close quarters, where she could be forever under the watchful eyes of his secret-service agents, Richelieu graciously permitted her to come back to court. It was safer for him than to allow her to wander at will around Europe, stirring up wars against him.

Besides—and here comes in the consummate craft of the man—Richelieu was certain that Marie would plunge at once into some new court conspiracy—and for such a crime he could justifiably shut her up in prison for the rest of her days.

The cardinal, as usual, was quite correct in his forecast. Back came Marie, and Paris welcomed her as a returning sovereign. Anne was hysterical with

joy. Courtiers, high and low, did

homage to her charm.

From the throng of sighing gallants, she chose the elderly Marquis de Chateauneuf, a powerful noble of strong personal fascination and a trusted friend of Richelieu's.

Marie's counsels and aid raised De Chateauneuf to still higher honors, Then, when the time was ripe, she played the siren and cajoled him into joining a thriving young conspiracy against his patron, Richelieu. As usual, Richelieu's spies kept their master apprised of the whole affair, and when the hour was ripe, the cardinal struck.

Chateauneuf spent the next ten years -until Richelieu's death-in a dungeon of the Bastile. Other conspirators were banished, jailed, or killed. But the biggest fish escaped. In other words, Marie had for once used such Machiavellian cunning in shrouding her own share in the plot that Richelieu was not able to prove anything definite

against her.

He had evidence enough against her to have sent a mere man to the block, but Marie was-Marie. The queen and half the court adored her. To kill or imprison such a woman the most damning evidence was needful. And such evidence Richelieu did not possess. All he could do, in his chagrin, was to send her away once more from Paris. Marie was growing used to that.

This time she went to Touraine-a province whose soil had ever been suited to a fruitful conspiracy crop. she made new plans against Richelieu and waited for them to ripen. In the interim, the octogenarian archbishop of Tours totteringly laid his archepiscopal

heart at her pretty feet.

For lack of something better to amuse her, she played with this cardiac relic for a while, then kicked it aside in weariness for a more welcome gift. For La Rochefoucauld-prince among wits and wit among princes-on his

visits between Paris and his château of Verteuil, had begun to stop off to pay his respects to the semibanished superwoman. And a new love affair set in.

Her latest plot against Richelieu died before it could mature. And this time the cardinal had all the evidence against her he wanted. A former lover sent her word that Richelieu was sending to bring her back to Paris under guard, there to imprison her.

She fled through one gate of Tours just as the troop of horse sent to seize her entered the city through another gate. I have already told you how she

escaped into Spain.

Furious at losing his prey and at the laughter against him that the tale of her clever ruse provoked, Richelieu wreaked his deferred revenge by clapping poor Rochefoucauld-who had had nothing to do with the conspiracy-into the Bastile, presumably for the crime of loving Marie de Chevreuse. Though, if all her adorers had been thus punished, France must needs have run into debt at once for the building of new prisons.

Marie remained in comfortable exile -breaking Spanish hearts instead of French, and conspiring at long rangeuntil Richelieu's death. Then Louis, freed from his tyrant, graciously permitted all the army of people who had been exiled by his eminence to come

back in safety to France.

One name alone did Louis exclude from this amnesty-the name of Marie, Duchess of Chevreuse. And the banished conspirator set herself to face patiently a new term of absence from \_ Paris. But a few months later Louis died, and back came Marie to court.

Here she found that the fox had succeeded the lion. Mazarin, the Italian, had succeeded Richelieu. And over the queen regent, Anne of Austria, Mazarin held as puissant sway as had Riche-

lieu over Louis.

At first this did not greatly concern

Marie. Richelieu was dead, and she had no one to conspire against. Moreover, she was just then too deeply enthralled in a brand-new love affair to bother much about anything else.

Her latest adorer and adoree was the thick-headed Duke of Beaufort, grandson of Henry of Navarre; a man so handsome that women used to mob the doors of the inns where he chanced to be stopping, and so stupid that the chief literary effort he was able to achieve was the illegible scrawling of his own name. His one recorded speech that shows even semianthropoid intelligence was:

"I like Hannibal better than Cæsar, because Hannibal left no 'Commentar-

ies' to bore poor schoolboys."

But, stupid as he was, Beaufort could love and hate very intensely. And he hated Mazarin as much as he loved Marie. So Marie obediently began to hate Mazarin, too. Mazarin had cut down the privileges of some of the nobles and had succeeded in offending many more.

Wherefore, presently, the usual conspiracy was hatched, Beaufort its brawn and Marie its brain. The siren was quite happy to be back at her old

trade again.

Mazarin had been Richelieu's pupil. From his master he had learned the fortunate art of unearthing plots against himself. He discovered the present one. Beaufort was sent to prison at Vincennes. Marie was, by way of variety, ordered to leave Paris.

She went to her château at Dampierre. There, thanks to Anne's fondness for her, she would have been left in peace had she had the sense to behave herself, but that was not Marie's

way.

She loved Beaufort, and Beaufort was in prison, eating himself fat and improving his Heaven-sent intellect by training a pet dog to howl dolefully whenever Mazarin's name was spoken.

Marie could not rest content while her beloved was undergoing such agonies

of body and spirit.

Ever loyal to her lovers and to those who had been associated with her in her plots, she made such a clamor over De Beaufort's imprisonment and the punishment meted out to her other assistants in the foiled scheme that she was ordered to depart even farther from Paris. To Touraine once more she went, and there started a new conspiracy. Mazarin heard of it and sent to arrest her. Again she was warned. Again she fled; this time making her escape from France by sea.

Landing in England, she lost no time in winning the worship of the Earl of Pembroke. After a brief romance, she tired of England, and Pembroke gave her an escort to take her safely into Flanders. Here she once more ran across the Duke of Lorraine, and resumed with him their old relationship

where it had left off.

French politics at length simmered down; Mazarin was no longer terrible. Marie returned unmolested to Paris a new Paris that scarce knew her.

She was fifty, but still so beautiful as to enslave, at sight, the fastidious Marquis de Laigues and many another. Her husband, De Chevreuse, died. And Marie promptly regularized her affair with De Laigues by one of those "mariages de conscience" which were at the moment a craze in the world of fashion.

Now, it seemed, the stormy petrel had decided to abandon altogether her old ways of strife. She patched up her differences with Mazarin, and thereafter became his ally, and—by some freak of fancy—his chief adviser in matters of

politics.

In her declining years, having outlived Queen Anne, Richelieu, Louis XIII.—all the familiar figures of her time, including her last lover, De Laigues—Marie withdrew to a secluded house at Gagny, where her last days

were spent "in religious exercises and works of charity." She died there at the age of seventy-nine, August 12,

1679.

Have you noticed the ripe—not to say overripe—years to which many of the super-women lived? Ninon, Elizabeth Patterson, and Betty Jumel went far into the nineties; George Sand, Marie de Chevreuse, and Jeanne Récamier into the seventies. The only three heroines in our series who did not reach or pass full middle age were Adrienne Lecouvreur, Cleopatra, and Peg Woffington. Of this trio, the first two

died violent deaths, the third was stricken with paralysis.

Is it coincidence? Or does the mystic super-woman quality carry with it also the secret of a semiperpetual youth which takes the form of exceptionally long life? Who can tell?

But, for that matter, who can tell with certainty anything about a super-woman—except that she is a law unto herself? An unknown law at that.

The April number of AINSLEE'S will contain the next article in Mr. Terhune's Superwomen series: "Lady Hamilton: Patron Saint of Dime Novel Heroines."



## A SPRING SERMON

MARCH was a braggart, a boisterous rake.

Taking his careless fill,

Boldly he swaggered along the brake,

Boldly across the hill.

Whistling his challenge, he strutted by,

Slapping his glove on his booted thigh.

Light was the mischief that gleamed in his eye,

And lighter his boastful will.

Down through the valley, and over the crest,
Wondrously ill at ease,
Something then hurried him east, then west,
Calling beyond the trees;
Something but ordered that he aspire,
Whispered, and laughed at his baffled ire,
Bent and drew near him—a dream of desire
Elusive and sure to tease.

Bright grew his prospect, beginning to seem
Greener than pine or larch;
Boldly he challenged his long-sought dream—
April, star-eyed and arch.
Sudden his temper was slow to dare,
Sudden the heart of him melted there.
Bachelors, read, and in season beware!
Consider the end of March!
CHARLES CAMPBELL JONES.





ARKNESS made a black cave of the bungalow dining room. It was a cave fragrant with the smell of pine woods, tremulous with the throb of

surf against the cliff, and heavy with the desolation of two o'clock in the morn-

ing.

Unfamiliar furniture impeded the man's progress. His pocket flash, which had shown him the kitchen window where he had forced an entrance, had for several minutes failed to light. He felt nervous, but his nervousness arose from no circumstance so trivial as being alone in the darkness of a strange place. The family were away—he had made sure of that—and they kept no servants in this wilderness to which they fled now and then from their city residence. Yet he had a queer impression that something retreated as he advanced.

A furry ball grazed his chin, and illogical dismay made him strike out. His hand hit a soft object that gave forth a squeak of astonishment when he gripped it, altogether involuntarily, in

his arms.

"Ugh!" he cried. "What—"."
The thing in his arms stiffened.

"Turn on the light!" he commanded. As the switch clicked and the electricity blazed, he drew down the visor of his rough cloth cap.

"Well!" he remarked, after a deep breath.

The thing was a girl. Her bright, frightened eyes peered up at him from under a straw bonnet such as women wear for motor drives, a bonnet surmounted by the tall blue feather that had brushed his face. She wore a long blue coat, the pockets of which bulged. One hand clutched a traveling bag that seemed to be heavy, and the other held a pair of boots. He saw the boots quiver.

"Don't be scared," said he. "I won't hurt you. But, say! You sure scared me, all right! What made you act so creepy? Why didn't you sing out?" The girl moistened her lips, but gave no answer. "Excuse me for grabbing you," he went on. "You know, I—I didn't expect to meet any one. How—I hope you don't mind if I ask." His pause was significant, yet it brought no response. "How do you happen to be here?"

An exceedingly small voice replied: "I live here."

"Beg pardon?"

"I live here," the voice repeated.

For a few seconds he regarded the girl as if in an effort to guess a riddle. "Are you alone?"

"No!" she gasped, a panic-stricken catch in her throat. The boots clacked together. "My c-cousins—two men—are in the next room."

The man's laugh was not ill-natured. "Your c-cousins are mighty sound sleepers. Hadn't you better call them? And"—his tone deepened to sarcasm as he took in the costume—"do you always tramp, or motor, so early in the day?"

A vindictive flash, like a spurt of

blue lightning, leaped from her eyes be-

fore they wavered.

"Suppose we sit down and talk it over." He extended his hand to relieve her of the bag. She swung it behind her, dropped the boots, and began to tug at a pocket. "Don't pull that on me!" he growled. But after he had taken the revolver away, his anger vanished in a smile that illumined all of his face that was visible above the upturned collar of his ulster. "What's the use trying to bluff each other? I'll tell you how I happen to be here. Then you'll understand this—ah—interruption."

The girl slipped the boots on and dropped into a chair at the dining table. He seated himself upon the table edge, removed his cap, and cast about for a preface. His face—which was young, tanned, and fantastically scratched—would have been comely in spite of the scratches if it had been clean. The hair above it curled enough to show tawny glints under the glow of the chandelier. His gray eyes were the sort that are luminous when things go well, but turn to steel gimlets when matters go awry.

While he hesitated, there came through an open window the drone of the forest and the churn of the surf as it raked its million pebbles down the beach. There was no need to put burglar catches on these dining-room windows, for they overhung the cliff brim. This reflection, and the mournful noises, impressed on him anew the loneliness of

the bungalow.

"Perhaps, when I broke that lock on the kitchen window, you imagined—— At least, it would have been natural for you to think——" He stole a glance at her. "Well, it certainly looked burglarish."

At the word, she gave him another blue flash, and began to drum on the table.

"But the truth," he resumed, not afraid to meet the flash, "is that I am in-

vited down here for the week-end by the fellow who owns the place." She raised her eyebrows, pushed back her bonnet, and stared. "I tried to get here by auto, but the machine busted a few-hundred miles away in the woods. I beat it through the timber for hours, got lost, mixed it up with a brier patch, hit the trail again—and finally landed. Guess the people are away. At least they didn't answer when I rang the doorbell. You heard me ring?"

"They heard you in China," she said

crisply.

"Sorry I disturbed you." There was a thin edge of satire on the apology. "The folks are out joy riding, I suppose. Their machine is gone; I almost broke my neck trying to get a squint into the garage. Probably it balked, same as mine, 'way off in the woods where messages don't grow." He nodded toward the telephone on a desk near the windows. "Have they sent any word?"

The girl shook her head. Her lips, pressed together like rumpled poppy petals, the scowl that showed beneath a wisp of chestnut hair aslant her forehead, indicated the struggle in her mind between belief and suspicion. The story sounded plausible. It was exactly what a truthful young man would say, and it was exactly what a keen-witted young man might invent. In either case it ignored her assertion that she lived there.

"This is Frederick Somer's bungalow," he added. Then he folded his arms and waited, judgelike, for her

to speak.

"I'll tell you how I happen to be here," she faltered, "if you'll be so good as to listen."

"I'd like to know," he answered.

Whether this was more irony she could not decide. "I, too, am invited down for the week-end." From beneath lowered lids she noted the effect of this explanation. "When I told you that I lived here, I didn't tell the—exact

truth. You startled me, and I got a little rattled." She waited for a comment, "My experience but he made none. was much like yours, only I climbed in a bedroom window. The man that drove me up from the village late in the afternoon opened it for me. When the Somers didn't come, I felt timid, but I didn't want to walk those twelve miles to the village. By and by I went to sleep. When the doorbell rang, I put on my hat and coat, intending to run out the back way. But you appeared at the kitchen window, so I started for the front door."

His gaze had taken on the gimlet quality, yet after a moment it softened. The story sounded plausible. It was exactly what a truthful young woman would say, and it was exactly what a keen-witted young woman might invent.

"Since we're both guests here"—he rose—"what do you say to eats? I haven't had any supper."

Her relieved sigh was almost inaudible. "There's the skeleton of a Welsh rabbit on the sideboard," she suggested. "I collected it, but I felt too tired to build him."

"I'll build you the finest Welsh rabbit that ever hopped down Red Lane. It's one of the best stunts I do," the man rejoined. He transferred from sideboard to table the copper chafing dish and its big spoon, the cut-glass water carafe, and the copper alcohol filler.

"There are matches in the kitchen, I'll get them," said the girl.

"Got 'em right here." He indicated a match box on the sideboard.

His tanned young face was imperturbable, but, although he ignored the girl's movement toward the dark kitchen and the back door, a tang of battle smoke spiced the air. A skirmish had been lost and won. The tang lingered through the next few minutes, while the man busied himself with cheese and butter. He arranged a box of crackers, the salt and pepper shakers, and a can of mustard, in a row across the table midway between the girl's place and his own. To eke out the rampart, he utilized a folded newspaper that lay on the telephone desk.

"That's the dead line," he grinned, "and here's the flag of truce." He laid her revolver at the end of the row.

The girl gave him a long, steady look, which he affected not to notice as he ben't above the chafing dish.

"She's coming slick," he announced.
"Do I seem to lamp a coffee percolator
on that serving table? And—could it
be? I'm well-nigh persuaded that a
coffee can sneaks near by."

"You're well-nigh right. I sneaked it in from the kitchen myself."

The girl pounced on can and percolator. A delicious coffee odor began to mingle with the comfortable odor of melted cheese. The bubble of the percolator punctuated the hum of the chafing dish. At each table end an alert young person brooded over a violet alcohol flame and pretended not to scrutinize the face of the alert young person opposite.

"Plates!" demanded the man gayly.

"Cups!" demanded the girl.

In return for two cups, she gave him two plates. He smiled down at her when the Dresden ware changed hands. "I've a good mind to tell you what I'd almost doped out," he said, after a little.

She was pouring a cup of amber coffee. "H'm?" she asked. They had become well enough acquainted for that.

"Here's bunny!" he announced, and passed a plate of crackers drowned in golden cream. "Lap him right up. I've got a copyright on the critter. He's guaranteed not even to waggle his ears after you've gulped him. Shall I put you wise on what struck me when I first saw you? I thought, just for a minute—" He surprised a wary glance, hesitated, and started to pick up

his fork. For the first time he noticed that no fork was there. "Oh, fine business! We haven't any tools!"

"Never mind. Let's eat with our fingers. It's more fun," the girl protested.

But the man had already reached the sideboard. He pulled out a drawer. It was empty. He pulled out the other drawer. It was empty.

"Swell idea!" he ejaculated.

The girl thought she asked, "What?" But she merely made a small noise in her throat.

"To take the family plate along when you go on an all-night motor trip. That's what this family did." He sat down at the table and lifted a cracker festooned with rabbit. "Fingers it is." His steel-gray eyes bored into hers. "After all, pickers and stealers were made before forks."

For the space of many heartbeats the girl's pallor formed her only response. Then she said: "The rabbit is nice."

"Wonder if they took anything else?" he proceeded, his gaze focused on the heavy bag beside her chair. "Silver toilet pieces—stuff like that? The lady of the house would probably be rather cut up if she lost that junk, or if—"

"Yes, she'd feel pretty bad," the girl agreed, in a hoarse little voice. "I know how much she thinks of it. You see, I—I know her very well, indeed. We went through—through finishing school together."

The man let his gaze of steel rest on her once more. "That's interesting,

Miss—ah——"

"My name is Beryl Rattisbone."

She supplied the information with apparent nonchalance, though there might have been a flicker around her mouth. An inscrutable expression crossed his face. The Rattisbone multimillions, for many years a subject of national boast, were at present the subject of international comment.

"Glad to know you, Miss Rattisbone. You just ran down here for a little vacation—relief from society and fortune hunters, and all that?"

She shrugged assent. "They bore me. I like to slip away from the crowd and get my ideas polished again. That's why I dropped out of Newport, not telling people where I'd gone—the newspapers tag you round so!—and hustled down here to the woods."

"And even so soon, I suppose, you've polished your ideas till they shine like

-silver."

"I haven't had time." Her careless

laugh ended in a gulp.

The rustle of the forest and the beat of the ocean had a chance to make themselves heard in the room again. The girl stared at her plate, crumbling crackers. The man stared at her. After a long while he began to grin. The laughter glimmered first in his eyes and then spread over his unwashed face until he broke into a chuckle that was half delight and half admiration.

"Ticket me for the prize bonehead, not to have recognized you sooner! A man pointed you out to me one night as you came from the opera house. Gosh, Miss Beryl Rattisbone, how

you've changed!"

"But perhaps I wasn't wearing these old things. They make a difference,"

she expostulated faintly.

"They sure do! And no doubt that's why you don't resemble these photographs that have filled the newspapers lately."

"M-my photographs always flatter

me."

He did not deny the statement. "So you've decided to buy Messy? Or didn't you notice the announcement of your engagement in the afternoon papers?"

"Why, no, I didn't." Her voice held an uncertain ripple of laughter. "Was it announced? How annoying! That's

a mistake."

"Glad to hear it," he chuckled.

"I mean," she added smoothly, "that

I haven't given the Prince dei Mestini his answer."

He fell upon the Welsh rabbit as if amusement had roused his appetite.

"Ten million dollars is quite a price," he conceded.

Her eyebrows went up at the impertinence. "It's the custom, I understand, for the bride to have a dowry in those foreign countries."

"And it's the custom in those foreign countries, I understand, for the bridegroom to cop the wad as soon as the ceremony's over."

She attempted a scowl. "But to keep up the estates, to repair the castle—that fine old ruin——"

"Yah! To keep up the mortgage and repair that fine old roué!"

Her assumption of personal offense struggled against a laugh. "But if the bridegroom gets the ten million, the bride gets the title. Princess dei Mestini. It—it listens stylish." He groaned. "Well, what would you do if you were a woman and the Prince dei Mestini asked you to marry him?"

"I'd punch his block off," he answered instantly.

The girl leaned back in the chair and giggled. Her motor bonnet had slipped a bit to one side. The comic angle of its feather, the girl's spontaneous mirth, and a sudden mental bird's-eye view of the whole situation, proved too much for the man's risibilities.

Two people cannot eat and laugh together without growing companionable. The tension relaxed, the slight uneasiness vanished.

"Tell me," said the girl, mock serious, putting her elbows on the table and her chin on her hands, "what do you think of people who marry for money and titles?"

"My career's been a hard one, and I can't always put my ideas into polite speech. I'd rather not tell you what I think of 'em."

"Well, a lot of my career's been

hard," she said, after reflection, "but it's taught me this: The only satisfactory things are those you can lay your hands on, like money. Or position, if you have money enough. You know what I mean?"

He gave a tolerant shake of his head. "Maybe I've experienced more life than you have. It strikes me that the woman who marries for reasons like that—"

"Go on!" she scoffed.
"Is a bad woman."

The girl's eyes widened at the unexpected harshness of the words.

"A woman ought to marry a man" he finished the sermon and the rabbit at the same time—"not a dollar bill. Nor a smell. Those dungeons and castles and moats do smell, you know."

"The drawbridge, the castle moat" her gaze was dreamy—"it's those things that get me."

"Better cast out the moat from your eye," he advised,

"And then I can see the beam in—"
She did not conclude. For there really was a beam in her neighbor's eye at the moment. "Of course, a woman ought to marry a man," she harked back. "But how's she to tell a true man when she meets him?"

"A man," he replied, his eye still beaming, "is a person who doesn't know how to side-step."

She refilled her coffee cup, almost at ease once more. "There ain't no such animal."

"Messy doesn't fit, anyway. He's already side-stepped two wives. Better not be the third!"

"I'll think it over," the girl promised, her composure unruffled by so much as a smile. "It's nice of you to advise me when we haven't been introduced."

"Oh, I forgot," he said. "My name's Van Evart."

"Cyrus E. T. van Evart, I presume?"
Her voice was velvet.

"Sure," he answered.

"I've always wanted to meet you," she confessed.

He caught the sparkle in her eyes. The Van Evart millions were no less a byword than the Rattisbone. The younger Van Evart's exploits in his early youth and explorations in his latter youth were talked about in places where the fame of the Rattisbone fortune had never penetrated. Indulgently the man joined her laughter.

"Why not?" he argued. "I have to be

somebody."

She sparkled the more. "Where did you pick up all that slang? In Timbuktu? In Siberia?"

"In Harvard. A college course is death on the English language. Same

as finishing school."

"Isn't it strange," she asked, "that though we're both well acquainted with —ah—the people who own this bungalow——"

"Frederick Somer owns this bungalow, I told you," he slid in. "Fred's a

great pal of mine."

"Of course you didn't notice his name on the front door, where you stood ringing the bell so long," she slid back at him.

"No, I didn't. It never occurred to me that a man would put his name plate on the front door of a bungalow in the woods. Although, if he bothered to install a doorbell and a telephone and electric lights, he'd be capable of anything. Dear old Fred!"

"But isn't it strange that they've never spoken to us about each other?"

His mouth twisted. "It is queer. But I've been away so much, and they

know so many people."

"And you've altered so, Mr. van Evart! When I saw you, it was soon after you'd been hit over the nose with a polo stick in a game down at Newport six years ago. People said you would carry the scar through life."

He looked slantwise down his unscathed nose. "The newspapers got that wrong, too. Very annoying. By the way, Miss Rattisbone, I hope you haven't forgotten that time you were engaged to me."

"C-certainly not!"

"It lasted—how long? Let me see!" The man wrinkled his forehead.

"Until I saw the report of it."

"Funny how the rumor got started when we weren't acquainted."

Primness clothed her as with a garment. "It was before you reformed and became an explorer. You and your motor car and that chorus girl had driven through the Public Garden fountain. Some reporter saw her and thought she looked like me."

"Doesn't it eat into your society duties a lot, reading the papers so much?"

he inquired.

Her laugh acknowledged the thrust. "Now I think of it, there's a picture of you in this morning's Star," she retorted. He handed over the paper that formed a link in the "dead line," and she turned the sheets rapidly. "It seems you're in Beverly for the season. You attended the Poindexter bridge party this afternoon." She offered him a page. "You don't resemble your photographs, either, do you?"

"I hope not!" he grunted. "Tut, tut! Don't the papers ever get anything right?" A sketch and big headlines on the opposite columns caught his eye. "Hello!" he muttered. "Hel-lo!" The girl's figure tightened and her face grew sharp. "Did you see this about the

automobile burglar?"

"I glanced at it," she admitted.

He buried his face in the pages, whence his voice rose, muffled: "It seems there've been a lot of burglaries round this section, done by some one with an auto. Many people think it's a—a clever woman. But the police think it's a man. Anyway, a reward of two hundred——"

It happened in a moment. He saw her hand dart toward the revolver. He saw an arc of flame as her elbow upset the percolator. The alcohol lamp gave a flare and went out before it reached the floor, but the flare set her clothes ablaze. She screamed, beating at the flame with her bare hands. The man tore off his ulster, threw it about the writhing figure, pushed her to the floor. He rolled her over and over till she struggled for breath.

"My arm!" she moaned, when he un-

wrapped the coat.

Without a word he sprang into the kitchen, lighted his way by matches to the pantry, and found a box of saleratus. A trail of white marked his course as he returned. Skillful as a physician, he set about his task, and not until the wounded arm was poulticed and tied up in his handkerchief did he speak. They were both seated on the floor, feet drawn back from the coffee and the saleratus paste that spread beneath the table.

"So you tried to double cross me, little girl?" he said. "Somehow I didn't think you'd do that." The girl turned her white face away. "Why?" he

asked.

Three times he asked it, and at last he put two fingers under the averted chin and tilted her head back so that she had to look at him. Tears welled in her eyes. With a rush they started down her cheeks. Hysterical sobs wrenched her shoulders. The man gathered her against him, patting the motor bonnet.

"Oh, I'm so frightened! I'm so frightened!" she managed between long shudders. "And that f-fire was the—

last-straw!"

"You're not afraid of me?" She nodded and burrowed deeper into his sleeve. "Listen!" His voice was so stern that she listened perforce. "Don't you know that I won't hurt you?"

"Yuh-yes!" she gasped.

"But you felt safer with a gun in your hands?" The remark verged on gruffness. He released her, and, after a search among the chair legs, pressed a cold object into her fingers. The contrary young woman thrust it aside. He laid it on the table, and at once she broke into renewed tears. "What's the matter now?" he asked.

"You saved my life," she wept, "just

when I'd tried to-"

His kindly brusqueness exorcised her hysterics. "Pooh! What of it? Turn off the waterworks—the fire's out. That's right. Now, see here. You've got nerve and education. I—I'd like to help you to some healthier view of life." Her demure look challenged his license as a teacher of ethics, and he appreciated the humor of the task. "At least I never tried to shoot a man in cold blood."

"I didn't intend to shoo-shoot you,"

she sniffed.

"Glad to hear that, for if you'd killed me, I should have been mad as hops." He dropped the teasing tone. "I won't ask why you do it. That's your affair. But this isn't a nice job for a woman. It's bad enough for a man—dangerous, dirty work. I'd kind of like to hear you say that you'd give it up. There're a dozen other things you could do."

A dimple played at the corner of the poppy mouth. "I could marry Messy."

"You might." He refused to joke. "There's a Messy in almost every woman's life. But picking pockets is less sportsmanlike than burglary, and marrying Messys is less sportsmanlike than picking pockets. It'd please me if you'd promise to cut out all such rough stuff."

She considered the matter, digging a forefinger into the scorched ulster. "But sometimes it's necessary—"

"Don't side-step, little girl. Be a

The face she lifted was radiant. "I believe I will!" Thrilled by a sudden comradeship, they shook hands on the compact. He dropped her fingers after a long moment, and roused himself.

"No doubt the Somers will be home soon," he observed.

"I suppose so," she answered.

There was an interval of nervous hesitation.

"Well, then!" She did not help him. "Hadn't you better go?"

"Why, no," she replied. "Hadn't

From the expression on her face he thought she intended to reiterate her explanations, but it was evident that she realized their futility.

"It's about time for us to drop the bluff, isn't it?" he suggested. "But I guess I know what you mean. You don't want me to see what direction you take? That's clever, too. Well, I'd consent to go out for a while—of course, returning when my friends arrive—only—only—" His glance wandered to the bag.

"Only you've got to protect your pal's property?" Her smile was not without

malice.

He made a gesture of deprecation.

"Same here," she said. "I'd consent to go out for a while—of course, returning when my friends arrive—only I've got to protect your pal's wife's property."

"I didn't think you'd quibble over a little silver," he answered, in keen disappointment. "'Tisn't worth it."

"Seems to be worth your quibbling over!"

"But it's different with me. You promised—"

"My promise doesn't affect this silver." Her tone took on a plaintive note. "Don't you think I've earned some right to do what I like with it?"

"Don't you think I've earned some right in it, too?"

A shock of disdainful surprise came to them both. Neither had suspected this stubbornness in the other.

"I have it!" The man slapped the table and dragged the girl to her feet.

"We'll both leave the silver, and we'll go together."

"No," she objected. "And, oh—I've remembered—"

"Yes, we will." He got into his scorched ulster. "Here, take your gun!"

"You take it," she urged. "And listen! The fire made me forget, and before that I didn't care. You've got to hurry, because—"

"We'll go down the road to the village. It's a good twelve miles, but——"

"No," the girl repeated, "not the village, because—"

A thud came from outside the kitchen. It sounded like a hand against the window.

"Oh, why didn't I warn you before?" the girl wailed. "It's too late!"

An unpleasant smile curved his mouth. "What a fool I am! Of course you have pals."

"No, no! It's the constable! I telephoned to the village for him when you were at the front door. I told him there was a—a burglar here." Her tongue stumbled over the word.

"Well, that's a trick worth knowing!"

glowered the man, aghast.

Another thud came from outside the kitchen. At this she trembled and whimpered: "Let's hide!"

"No need to side-step." His arm went around her shoulders. "We'll bluff it out together. I can do it, if you'll stand by me."

For answer, she got the revolver and

brought it to him.

"What's that you have there?" he asked, as he cocked it. "Mrs. Somer's jewelry?" At the sharp question she clapped a hand to her pocket. "I noticed it when I stood beside you just now," he explained suavely. "Oh, of course I understand—you took the things to save 'em from thieves, same as you corralled the silver." Perhaps it was by accident that the muzzle of the revolver turned in her direction. "Bet-

ter let me have the stuff. I'm doing this for your sake, little girl. If there should be any trouble, you don't want to be caught with the goods."

While she hesitated, there came still another thud, and for a startled instant she turned her head. The man thrust his fingers into her pocket and snatched a lustrous handful of gold and gems.

"Awful careless of Mrs. Somer to leave 'em lying round," he remarked.

Every drop of blood fled from the girl's face and left it white, not with terror, but with rage. The man almost flinched before the brilliance of her eyes.

"This isn't a double cross, I suppose," she said through clenched teeth. "You saved my life, but you make it pretty hard for me to be grateful. Get out of the house! You'd best get out before I have the power to prevent you!"

"The power?" he smiled.

Jar and creak of a window cautiously raised came to their ears. The girl sprang to the electric switch.

"If you're here when the constable enters this room, I'll tell him you're a burglar," she said clearly.

His jaw set. "That'll let you out, anyway," he admitted.

At once she snapped off the light. For a few seconds he heard her quick breathing in the darkness, and then came an onslaught from the kitchen. Quiet did not distinguish the constable's methods. The room seemed full of vociferous men, of furniture tumbled about, of commands to "Come out of that!" and of candid remarks on the sharpness of the table corners. Some one stumbled to the electric button. The rush of light revealed the man leaning at ease against a window frame. The girl cowered by the sideboard.

A very red face gave a whoop of triumph. "Thar he is, boys! Thar he is!" The red face—it proved to be the constable's—plunged toward the man. Two deputies plunged after. All three officers grasped the man's arms.

"Young feller," the constable began,

and raised his revolver.

"Don't shoot, Si!" implored one of the deputies. "My nose's right in the way."

"I will, 'less he drops that thar gun," wheezed the constable. The man surrendered his weapon. "Waal, you're a pretty-lookin' bird!"

In truth, a cascade of saleratus down the side of his face, interspersed with various smudges from the burned ulster, had not greatly improved the young man's appearance. He realized this, and, shaking off one of the deputies, drew a sleeve across his mouth. The effect was not happy.

"Two hundred dollars re-ward," murmured the constable.

"Well?" blustered his prisoner, and drew the sleeve once more across his face, with still more disastrous results.

The constable snickered.

"Shut up!" said the man savagely.

The constable snickered again, and—his right to unmolested merriment vindicated—plucked a handbill from inside the crown of his straw hat and compared the prisoner's appearance with the printed description.

"That's him, all right!" he announced, and turned to the girl. "This the feller you seen sneakin' round the house, ain't it?"

Two steel-gray eyes flashed from the saleratus and smut of the man's face. The girl cleared her throat.

"Why, no," she answered. "To be quite frank, this is—this is—s-some one else."

"To be quite frank—" the man broke in, evidently placing small reliance on her powers of plausible invention. He hesitated. It must be a tale that would clear both of them and prevent any spread of gossip, for, after all, two or three in the morning is an unconventional hour. "You see, I was looking for a bungalow farther on, and in the dark I hit the wrong house."

"Whose bungalow?" asked the constable. His promptness was amazing.

The desperate prisoner took a chance. "Smith's."

"No such party anywheres round here." The official jerked his head at the eager deputies. "Bring him along!"

But the man hung back. "Wait a minute! Can I have a word with the lady before I go?"

"Fire away!" said the constable.

"Alone, I mean," the man amended, reddening.

The constable cackled. "You're fly! But your Uncle Dudley ain't s' slow, neither." At that moment he noticed the chafing dish, and swooped, like a belligerent old hawk, upon the remains of the feast. "You wasn't in any 'tarnel rush to reach Smith's, I guess. How'd you account for all this?"

"I was hungry," the girl hastened to interpose.

The enemy eyed her. "They's two plates," he remarked. His gaze fell upon the bag. "Who does this belong to?"

"It's mine," the girl stammered.

For a moment the constable considered, before light dawned. "Sho! Aha! So that's the idee? Both bruk into the same house, hey?"

The man tried to shake his fist. "That's a lie!" he roared.

Again the constable jerked his head. "Bring 'enr both!"

"To jail?" the girl cried, white-lipped. "Why, we telephoned——"

"Of course she did, you old fool!" the man shouted. "What'd she ring you up for if she was a thief? Think she wanted to arrest herself?"

"Bring 'em both!" said the undis-

turbed constable.

Loud, and near at hand, the siren of a motor reverberated through the forest.

"The Somers, I bet a cooky!" wheezed the officer, and hurried out to meet them. Silently the two prisoners looked at each other, and looked away again.

On a tidal wave of excitement the Somers and the constable swam into the room. The constable waved a victo-

rious hand.

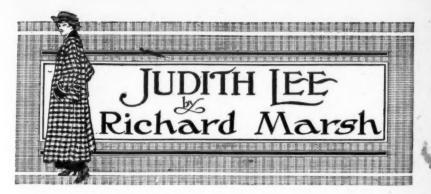
"Beryl!" shricked Mrs. Somer, and folded the girl to her breast.

"But who's the fellow?" Somer asked. "Good Lord, Cyrus, it isn't you?"

In the midst of her welcome, Mrs. Somer paused to survey the disheveled room. "What on earth have you two children done?" she demanded.

"I—I guess we've tacked the double cross on Messy," answered the man, and tried in vain to catch Miss Rattisbone's glance.





AUTHOR'S FOREWORD.—Judith Lee is a teacher of the deaf and dumb. She uses the oral system—that is to say, she teaches by means of lip reading. To so great a degree of proficiency has she brought her mastery of the art of lip reading that in her case the sense of hearing is practically superfluous. In other words, she can hear without ears; she has only to see a person's face, to watch the movements of the lips, even from a distance, to know everything that is being said. The result is that often, against her will, she is forced to play a leading part in real, live dramas—and sometimes comedies—of the most extraordinary kind. The readers of the following adventures, taken at random from her various note books, will be able to judge of the truth of this for themselves.

## LADY BEATRICE



WAS occupying a penny chair in Hyde Park one fine June morning, when there approached from the right one of the most beautiful girls I

have ever seen. She was tall, slight, and stately; if her face had a defect, it was that her features were too perfect. She reminded me of what Galatea might have been—a triumph of the sculptor's art come to life. Her dress was as perfect as her appearance. She seemed to know numbers of people, and, as she strolled, she nodded to this one and to that.

As she neared me, a man was approaching from the left—a tall, well-built man, broad-chested, who walked, head erect, with a certain stiffness suggestive of a drill sergeant. His hat was set just the slightest shade on the side of his head; his mustaches were waxed; he carried a gold-headed cane. I set him down as about forty years of age.

As he approached the girl, he eyed her with what struck me as an impudent stare. She did not glance in his direction at all, but was in the act of nodding to some friends on the other side of the railing; yet, as they passed each other, I saw her lips move and form the word "Clarice." They passed so close that they grazed each other; I had no doubt that the word had been uttered very softly, yet that it had been audible to him.

Each continued to stroll; no greeting had been exchanged; there had been nothing in their demeanor to show that they knew each other; yet I felt pretty certain that the girl had conveyed a message to the man—"Clarice." I wondered what the message meant; who Clarice might be; why it had been necessary to breathe her name so secretly; above all, why they wished the world to regard them as strangers.

A rather odd light was suddenly

thrown on the little scene I had just witnessed. Among the usual loiterers leaning against the railing were two men, almost immediately in front of me. They seemed to be gentlemen, and to be there—like the rest of the world—to see the people and take the air. I saw the elder say to the younger:

"You saw that fellow who passed just now? That's one of the biggest

blackguards in Europe."

His companion asked:

"Do you mean the man with his hat on the side of his head and the padded shoulders?"

"That's the fellow. He calls himself the Vicomte d'Aubry. He's one of those semi-demi-professional gamblers whom you always find taking the bank at baccarat at the continental casino. He was suspected of funny little practices for years; then they nailed him at Aix, and I believe somewhere else a little later. Still, I fancy he plays the banker at places where he isn't known, or where little peculiarities are overlooked. A friend in the police at Paris told me two or three years ago that they were after him for chantage-and they got him, too; but the thing was hushed up, as that sort of thing so often is. All the same, I believe he got the fright of his life. I wonder what the blackguard is doing in town."

I had in my hand bag at that moment a letter which the post had brought me that morning from a correspondent with whom I had some slight acquaintance-Lady Sarah Crawley. I had taken the letter with me that I might have it at hand for further consideration-it told such a queer story, and contained such a singular request. Lady Sarah said that, for some time past, a series of petty thefts had been taking place in houses of her acquaintance. It was feared that the thief must have been one of the guests who, because exposure had not followed, had grown in boldness, since the articles stolen were increasing in value.

Matters had reached a climax a few days ago, when she had been staying with her father, the Duke of Horsham. It was discovered, as one of the guests was about to leave, and her maid was packing, that a pearl necklace was missing from her jewel case, which had been there when she arrived. Lady Sarah went on to say that practically the same party was going to spend the week-end at a great house near London; would I come down as one of the guests? If I exercised my gift, I might find out what no one else could.

The presence of Lady Sarah's letter in my hand bag was recalled very forcibly to my memory by the encounter between that young and high-bred English girl and the foreign scamp, of which I had been a witness. He had been accused of chantage. That meant blackmail. A simple, innocent English girl might easily get herself sufficiently entangled with such an adventurer to enable him to make use of her in a manner that she had never dreamed possible. I kept asking myself, over and over again, who was Clarice? Why had this girl, with such secrecy, breathed her name?

Tiring of my penny chair, I joined the strollers. When I reached the corner by the statue, there, the center of a group of persons who were chatting together like old friends, was the girl of whom I had been thinking. A superintendent of police, with whom I had some acquaintance, was standing a little way off.

"Can you tell me," I asked him, "who

that young lady is?"

He looked at me with a twinkle in

"Got anything against her, Miss Lee? She's not in want of lessons. I don't think she's deaf and dumb."

"No," I admitted. "I don't think she is. She's chattering away just now.

She's so very beautiful that I thought I'd like to know who she is, if you know and it's not a breach of confidence to

impart your knowledge."

"Oh, yes, I know. She's a this season's débutante, the prettiest of the lot. She's Lady Beatrice Dacre, the youngest daughter of the Marquis of Putney."

I lunched that morning at the club. After lunch I had my coffee in the reading room. On the table was one of those silly ladies' fashion papers, which are nothing but a combination of advertisements. My eye caught a paragraph in one of the columns:

We hear great things of that well-known professor of the recondite art which professes to see such wonderful things in the lines of the palms of our hands—Clarice. We hear Clarice spoken of on all sides. The names of those who consult a palmist are never breathed in public, or we might mention some very great names whose owners are among Clarice's most constant consultants. Rumor has it that Clarice's studio, at No. 37 Airedale Street, which is not a stone's throw from Bond Street, is crowded whenever it is open—and yet that room can always be found for more ardent inquirers after truth.

It was the name, I take it, that caused that paragraph to, as the French phrase it, "jump to my eyes"—Clarice. It was the name that Lady Beatrice Dacre had breathed to the Vicomte d'Aubry.

Did that mean that the palmist's was to be made the scene of a rendezvous? I had heard of such places being used for such purposes; yet Lady Beatrice Dacre would have to be careful, or she might find herself in serious trouble.

I felt interested in Monsieur le Vicomte. It is, perhaps, not generally known that there are in London certain sources of information open to the initiated where something may be learned about almost any one. I gleaned no actual facts about that illustrious foreign nobleman, but certain suggestions were made which induced me, that evening, to pay a visit to a much-frequented res-

taurant within a hundred miles of Piccadilly Circus.

It was, as usual, pretty full when I entered. There was only one vacant table within reasonable distance of the door. I looked carefully around before I seated myself. So far as I could see, if he was coming, the vicomte had not yet arrived. I ordered a cup of coffee. There was a solitary individual at a table nearly fronting me, with that unhealthy sort of complexion which marks a certain type of Frenchman-at least to my mind. The man might have been made of wax; he could scarcely have seemed more inanimate if he had been. I had brought an evening paper, and I held it up in front of me as a screen. My vis-à-vis, in spite of his immobility, was impatient; he kept glancing at his watch, as if waiting for some one who did not come. I began to have an idea that I had seen him somewhere before: but I decided that the fact was that he was the croupier type of man, that machinelike creature in whom humanity seems dead, who is such a familiar figure in France, in places where they gamble.

My cup of coffee was drawing to a close; the waiter was eying me; he would swoop on it in a minute. I should either have to order something else or go. So I ordered a crème de menthe—one can linger over a crème de menthe for an indefinite period. As the waiter was pouring the bright green liquid into a tiny glass, I saw the Vicomte d'Aubry come through the door. I held up my paper. He looked about him—then came striding toward my vis-à-vis.

He sat down on the red plush seat beside the waxlike individual, so that both men fronted me. The greeting they exchanged was not particularly warm.

"You think I am your plaything, that you keep me waiting as long as you please? You ought to have been here half an hour ago."

It was the waxen man who spoke. As might have been expected, his lips barely moved—but they moved enough for me. Both men spoke in French. Precisely what the vicomte replied I was not sure. His face was sideways to me, so that it was not easy to be certain of the movements of his lips. That he was volubly apologetic was clear from the other's answer, which was frigidly contemptuous:

"You excuse yourself always. We all know your excuses. You will please to understand that the time has come when something else is required—some-

thing solid."

Again the vicomte's exact reply was lost to me; again the other's rejoinder

threw light on it:

"We do not require you to do what you call your best. We desire from you a certain thing—that only. Nothing else in substitution. Above all, no excuses."

Again the hiatus formed by the vicomte's answer. I began to wish that he would turn his face around, so that I might not have to guess at his words from the other's reply. The waxen man said, very coldly, very dryly:

"You have the presumption to suggest it. You are under a bond to pay ten thousand pounds, at least. You give me instead a necklace in which there are not a dozen pearls worth anything; you pretend that that shows the sincerity of your desire to pay. It won't do. We must either have the money or its equivalent before next Monday evening."

Then the vicomte did look round—all warmth, gesticulation.

"It is impossible! I give you my

word of honor it cannot be done!"
"Your word of honor? That also is not required. As for impossible, I know better. Attend to me."

There was something in the waxen man's manner of speaking that recalled a mechanical figure. He kept his tired, expressionless eyes fixed on the other's face.

"You have a certain lady friend. I wish to mention no names—you understand—we also understand: She goes to a certain house on Friday, for what here they call the week-end. To the same house are going two Americans, whom again I will not name."

"How do you know?" The vicomte asked the question with an eagerness that was in odd contrast to the other's

phlegm.

"We do know—that is enough. The American woman is taking with her her jewels; among them her rubies. You have heard of her rubies? You know whom I mean? I see you have heard of them; you do know whom I mean."

How he had learned this from the other's face I could not tell. He moved his lips so slightly that, while he was speaking, for fear of losing some essential word, I dared not move my eyes to observe the other. He continued:

"You may put pressure upon your lady friend as you have done before. And before this time on Monday you will hand me those rubies. I will give you a quittance in full and five thousand pounds in cash. You will be a rich man."

I could now see the vicomte's face quite plainly. He seemed to gasp.

"But," he exclaimed, "I have heard that those rubies cost a quarter of a million sterling—that there are no others like them in the world!"

"Americans often pay more for their jewels than they are worth; these things are exaggerated. I have explained that we require from you ten thousand pounds by Monday, or——" He paused; the vicomte winced. "I need not continue. I offer you an alternative—for us the rubies, for you a quittance and five thousand pounds. From no one else would you get so much, to say nothing of an assurance of absolute safety. You understand? It must be either the

one or the other; nothing will be accepted in substitution, and certainly no excuses."

The vicomte sat up straight, breathing heavily, as one might do who is threatened with something he fears yet cannot escape. The waxen man had had a tiny glass of brandy in front of him ever since I entered; he took from it the tiniest sip. It was still half full. The vicomte had nothing in front of him. The waiter took advantage of the pause in their conversation to address him.

"What is it that monsieur desires?"

He also spoke in French.

"Desires?" The vicomte looked at him with angry eyes. "I desire nothing. When I desire something, I will let you

know."

I was conscious that a few moments before a woman had entered—alone; that she had looked around her and was now moving toward the table at which the two men sat. Something caused me to glance at her; something caused the vicomte to glance at her also. When he saw her, he uttered an exclamation and half arose. What he meant to do I could not say; she was upon him before he had a chance to do it, whatever it was. Planting herself in front of him, she exclaimed, in French, in a voice that was audible all over the restaurant:

"So, pig! wretch! thief! liar! cur! beast! It is you! It is you! It is

you!"

She had in her hand a whip of some sort, with which, each time she said, "It is you!" she struck at him. The first time, taken unawares, the lash caught him right across the face; the second and third times he warded it off with his hands. I never saw a man so utterly taken aback by the mere presence of a woman. He made not the slightest effort to snatch the whip, or to prevent her striking at him. He did not even show any sign of resenting the

volume of her abuse. When she had struck at him three times, still in the same very audible tones, she went on:

"I have paid you this little visit to tell you that I know where you are to be found, and that presently you will hear from me again—for the last time."

She stood confronting him for two or three seconds; then, turning, she walked straight out. The place was in confusion; people had risen all over the room; persons in authority were hastening forward. But when it was seen that the incident was closed, calm returned. The vicomte remained standing; he pressed with his handkerchief the place where the lash had touched him. Then, when he presently sat down, the waxen man observed:

"I think that makes it still plainer how necessary it is that we should have the rubies before this time on Monday."

I waited for no more. I had an idea. I hurried after that woman. When I got into the street, I saw her, some twenty or thirty yards away, walking leisurely. I hastened after her, caught her up, and fell in by her side.

The next day I called on Lady Sarah Crawley instead of writing to her. When I had listened to all she had to say, I accepted her invitation for the week-end, on the understanding that I was not to go as a professional, with an honorarium of any sort in view, but as a simple guest. On the Friday, however, something occurred that would have rendered it very inconvenient for me to leave town. I telegraphed my excuses. On the Saturday, when I was nearly overwhelmed by the work that had come crowding in on me, demanding my immediate attention, a telegram was brought to me with the intimation that the reply was paid. I tore it open; as my prophetic soul had warned me, it was from Lady Sarah Crawley.

Unless absolutely impossible, please come at once. Something very serious has happened. Unless you can help, the consequences may be dreadful. I implore you to let me know by wire that you are coming at once.

SARAH CRAWLEY.

I read the telegram three times over. I considered for some seconds what it might mean; then, with a groan, I admitted that the work with which I had longed to deal, after all, would have to wait, and that I should have to go to Morebridge House. I could not easily forgive myself if dreadful consequences resulted because I had refused to render such help as was in my power.

All that part of the world that knows the lower reaches of the Thames knows Morebridge House. It stands in a prominent position on a treeless expanse of flat grassland, which, when the Thames is in flood, is not seldom under water. Possibly hundreds of thousands of people pass it and stare at it every

year.

I arrived at about five o'clock on that Saturday afternoon.

I had tea—every one was having tea—then Lady Sarah herself showed me to my room. The instant the door

closed she began:

"Oh, Miss Lee, if you only knew how glad I am to see you, and how earnestly I trust that you will be of help! I suppose no one ever was in a more unpleasant situation than I am. Mrs. Baxter-Raeburn's rubies have been stolen."

I was not a bit surprised; Lady Sarah seemed hurt because I showed that I was not.

"Of course, it doesn't matter in the least to you, but consider what it means to me. The Baxter-Raeburns have been most civil to us; my father was under actual obligations to them. They are his guests; as a compliment to him, Mrs. Baxter-Raeburn brings her famous jewels. She is not twelve hours in the house before her rubies are stolen." Lady Sarah sank into a chair, as if distress had robbed her of the use of her

legs. "They do say that Mrs. Baxter-

Raeburn's rubies cost a quarter of a million sterling."

"That sort of thing is often exag- gerated," I remarked.

Lady Sarah stared; she did not know

that I was a plagiarist.

"Even if they did cost less, it's quite certain that they cost an enormous sum and are immensely valuable. Quite apart from their value, the dreadful thing is not that they have been stolen, but that they have been stolen in my father's house. I almost feel as if I had taken them myself; while the duke told me this morning that unless they were recovered, he would never again be able to look the woman in the face."

"As I don't suppose, Lady Sarah, that you have taken them, or your father either, if you will tell me all about it, I'll see what I can do. Though I warn you at the start, as I have warned you already, that I am no thief catcher."

She told me all about it-at much greater length than it is necessary that I should tell it here: the strength of her feelings was the cause of continual diversions. Mrs. Baxter-Raeburn was a very foolish woman, as so many very wealthy women are. She had worn her rubies on the night of her arrivalwhich was the night before I appeared upon the scene. When the house was supposed to have retired for the night, she had a sort of party in her bedroom; some of the feminine guests went to view those precious rubies at closer quarters. When they had departed and she had retired to bed, Mrs. Baxter-Raeburn herself admitted that she had left them lying on her dressing table. The next morning, when her maid appeared, they were gone.

"And if you don't mind my speaking plainly," I remarked, "I should say, Lady Sarah, that it served her right. A woman who leaves such valuable jewels lying about her room, without any sort of protection, deserves anything."

"I agree—in a sense, I quite agree;

and if it had happened in anybody else's house, I should have told her to her face that it did serve her right. But in my own house it's different. When a guest comes to visit me, it is on the tacit understanding that she is not coming to a den of thieves, and that while she is beneath my roof she need fear nothing, either for herself or for her belongings."

"Who were the ladies who visited Mrs. Baxter-Raeburn in her bedroom?"

"Here is the list. You see there were five of them." A glance at the paper she handed me showed that Lady Beatrice Dacre had not been one of the five. "It is impossible to suspect any of them—you see who they are; in fact, I have not dared to tell them that the jewels have been lost."

"Have you told any one?"

Lady Sarah betrayed the anxiety she felt by the manner in which, coming close up to me, she lowered her voice to a whisper, as if she feared that the walls might have ears.

"Not a soul-not one. I have induced Mrs. Baxter-Raeburn to keep stillluckily she told me before she told any one else-by virtually promising that her rubies shall be returned to her before she leaves the house. You must perceive for yourself the scandal the mere announcement that they were gone would make; it would be in every paper in the world, to speak of nothing else. I assure you that neither Mr. nor Mrs. Baxter-Raeburn is the kind of person to keep silent in the face of such a loss-and, for my part, I really can't blame them. I have heard so much about the wonderful things you do, Miss Lee, that I dare to count upon your assistance in getting me out of the most uncomfortable position a woman was ever in."

I thought that, considering all things, it was pretty cool of Lady Sarah. I did not, however, hint at what I felt, if only because I happened, just then, to

be looking out of the window. A telegraph boy was going down the drive on his bicycle. A voice hailing him, he stopped. Some one ran toward him across the grass; it was Lady Beatrice Dacre. When she reached him, she handed him what I had no doubt was a telegraph form. Possibly the message it contained had been scribbled with a pencil. To make sure that it would be understood, she apparently asked him to read it out to her, which he did, I staring at him with all my might.

He stumbled over the first words, which were probably the address; I could not see her lips, but she probably helped him out. Then he got on better. I distinctly saw him say five words: "Clarice—at four—on Monday." That was all, but for me it was quite enough. Lady Sarah turned to see what I was looking at.

"The girl," she said, "is Lady Beatrice Dacre. She is only just out, and she is already engaged to Mr. Douglas Forrester—a most charming fellow, and, of course, from a monetary point of view, all that could be desired."

"She is engaged, is she?"

"It hasn't yet been announced, but it's just going to be. She, of course, hasn't a penny, but she has everything else that a man can want in the woman he marries. Say that you think you can help me."

I had moved away from the window and was turning things over in my mind. Lady Sarah watched me.

"I may observe," I told her, "that I don't think you're entitled to take it for granted that I can work miracles any more than any one else; but it so happens that I think, by the merest chance, I may be able to help-you. But we must understand each other at the start. My wish, Lady Sarah, is always, if possible, to keep matters out of the hands of the police."

"Miss Lee, I had really sooner almost

anything should happen than that we should have to call in the assistance of the police. That is the one thing both my father and I wish to avoid."

"Then, in that case, I may be able to do something for you. What you

want are the rubies."

"That's all I want—the only thing. Place me in a position to return them to Mrs. Baxter-Raeburn before Monday, if possible, and you will make me your debtor for life."

"Suppose the thief, in carrying them off, had dropped them in the park, and we were to find them there?"

"What do you mean?" Lady Sarah's

eyes were open to their widest.

"You must ask no questions. If, as I say, you were to find them in the park, would you undertake to ask no questions, but be content with your find?"

"Am I not to know who took them?"
"You are to show no curiosity of any kind."

"But these thefts, on a smaller scale, have taken place before. At least I think I ought to know whom I can trust and whom I can't. I can't ask my friends to form one of a party that contains a thief, whose identity is unknown to me."

"I think I can undertake, Lady Sarah, that in future you will be able to trust every member of your present house party as implicitly as yourself—if you

will ask no questions."

I am not quite sure if, when Lady Sarah went, she had not at the back of her mind vague suspicions of me. That she was thoroughly mystified was obvious, but for that I cared nothing. I had her assurance that she would make no inquiries of any sort, but would leave matters entirely in my hands. With that I was content.

Before she left, I had made her give me a sort of plan of the house, on which were the names of the guests, the rooms they occupied, and how they were approached. She had left me perhaps half an hour when I started on a little voyage of exploration. The plan showed that on the same floor on which I was, and not very far away, was the apartment occupied by Lady Beatrice Dacre. Having first made sure that the coast was clear, I went straight to it. I tried the handle; the door was locked. So the lady was inside. I rapped at the panel sharply. A voice inquired:

"Who's there?"

"Please open the door at once. It is some one who wishes to see you on very important business."

Not nearly so much celerity was shown as I had requested. Two or three minutes elapsed before the door was opened five or six inches, and a

girl's face looked out.

"Who are you? What do you want?" For answer I pressed the door farther back, entered, shut it behind me, and turned the key. The girl stared, as if in speechless amazement. I thought she looked more beautiful even than when I had seen her in the park—if only because the absence of a hat enabled one to realize how lovely her hair was. We fronted each other in silence for several seconds before she exclaimed:

"Who are you? What do you mean by this extraordinary conduct? How dare you come into my room like this?"

I saw that she was even more of a child than I had imagined; she spoke with a child's impetuous heat. I also saw that somewhere inside her was an uncomfortable suspicion that made her heart beat faster. I spoke coldly, allowing no sign to escape me which would show how much I was affected by her girlish loveliness.

"When I tried your door just now, and found it locked, I think you were trying on Mrs. Baxter-Raeburn's ru-

bies.'

She had more courage than I had expected. She gave one violent start, then made a great effort to recover herself. She was not so successful as she would have liked to be. She was shivering—as it were, both inside and out.

"What-what do you mean?"

"Give me Mrs. Baxter-Raeburn's jewels at once! You were hiding them while you kept me waiting outside the door."

The chance shot had found the mark. She repeated herself with a piteous stammer:

"Who-who are you? What-what

do you mean?"

"Last night, or, rather, early this morning, you entered Mrs. Baxter-Raeburn's room when she was asleep. You saw her rubies lying on the dressing table, and—you stole them."

She had fluttered back against the wall, like some hapless thing at bay.

She tried to gasp out a denial:

"It's—it's—"
I stopped her.

"Don't say it's a lie, or I shall hold you to be a more despicable thing than I do already-because you know it's true. The other afternoon you met the man who calls himself the Vicomte d'Aubry at the rooms of the disreputable creature who calls herself Clarice, and who is an associate of his. He suggested that you should take advantage of your friend's hospitality to steal jewels belonging to a fellow guest. You stole them. They are in your keeping now; you were trying them on when I came to your door; you propose to hand them over to him, in the palmist's rooms, at four o'clock on Monday afternoon."

She was, perhaps, at an age when one is easily impressed by what seems to be the marvelous. I fancy that she imagined herself to be in its presence then, and that I was a representative of the supernatural. Certainly, for some instants, she was nearly paralyzed by actual terror. She knew that what I had said was true; she could have had no

notion how I had acquired my information, and was terrified when it came, with what must have been such awful unexpectedness, from my lips. She stood close up against the wall, eying me as if I had been some terrible specter. For nearly a minute she was incapable of giving utterance to an articulate sound. I was not going to help her out. Then all at once an idea seemed to come into her head and force from her a question:

"Are you-are you anything to do

with the police?"

"That depends on you—upon whether there's anything in you that makes for good.

"Did he tell you—the Vicomte d'Aubry?"

"I have never spoken to him, nor he to me."

"Then how did you find out—what you have found out? Tell me who you are! Does any one—any one else in the house suspect?"

Before I could answer, she was seized with a new and still greater fear.

"You won't tell—you won't tell Douglas? Please, please, please don't tell him! I'll do anything, anything you like—if you won't tell him!"

"You're engaged to one man, yet at the dictate of another you play the thief. What sort of person can you be, Lady

Beatrice?"

"I'm not so bad as you think! I'm not! I swear I'm not! Only—only I'm in a terrible mess, and—and I had to do what he told me."

"You wish me to believe that you had to play the thief, and such a mean thief, at the command of a man like that?

Pray why?"

"It was—it was three years ago. I was—I was sixteen years old. I was sent to a school at Tours; at least, it wasn't exactly a school—it was supposed to be a private family. Father wished me to learn French. The Vicomte d'Aubry was a friend of the per-

son who kept the house. He paid attentions to me, and—oh, I was a fool! I was only a child—a silly simpleton. He pretended to care for me, and I thought I cared for him. I wrote him four letters—silly, idiotic, rotten letters. Then father took me away; he didn't like what he heard of the place. I wish he'd never sent me there!

"I forgot all about the Vicomte d'Aubry directly I got home; I never heard or thought of him until-until about four months ago. Then he came up to me in Hyde Park. I tried to cut him, but he wouldn't let me. He reminded me of the letters I had written to him. You see, I had forgotten all about them. I swear I never meant a single word I said in them! Don't you know what an idiot a girl can sometimes be; what romantic rubbish she can get into her head; and how, in moments of absolute lunacy, she can put it down on paper? That's what I did. I never dreamed that he would keep the letters. I thought he was a gentleman. I had no idea that any one ever did such things. When he told me that he still had my four letters, and that if-if I didn't do something for him, he'd send copies of them to Mr. Forrester, I-I was terrified out of my life."

"Were you engaged to Mr. Forrester

at the time?"

"Of course I wasn't. I—I knew that he was rather fond of me; and when that man spoke like that, I knew that I was fond of him. I told the vicomte quite frankly that there was nothing I wouldn't do to keep Mr. Forrester from finding out that I had written such letters."

"You couldn't have said to him a more foolish thing. If you had told him that it was a matter of complete indifference to you what he did with the letters, he might not have thought it worth his while to waste his time in threatening you."

"I see that now-I saw it directly

afterward; but there it was. I-I did tell him, and never since has he left me alone. He's-he's been making me do all sorts of things that I-that I hate to think of. Oh, if you know what I have gone through because I was such a simple-minded fool as ever to think that he was an honorable man! Then the other day Douglas asked me-asked me to marry him, and, of course, I said ves, though I was frightened half out of my life to think what the vicomte would do when he found out. So you can imagine what were my feelings when he told me that I must give him an interview at once. I knew what an interview with him meant. But what was I to do? I didn't dare make him angry. So, as you seem to know, I met him at Clarice's rooms. And he told me that Mrs. Baxter-Raeburn was coming here with her rubies, and that if I got them for him, he would give me back my letters."

"Rubies that cost a quarter of a million for four letters that are not worth the paper they are written upon—does that strike you as a good bargain for

you?"

"Do you take me for an utter idiot? Of course it isn't! But he made it quite clear that if the rubies weren't in his hands by Monday, the copies of the letters would reach Douglas that day. And that might have meant the end of everything to me-of everything! Douglas thinks I'm a perfect saint, and you know no girl who ever lived was that. And if he found out that I was the kind of creature who could write such letters. he-he wouldn't let me explain. couldn't explain even if he'd let me; I doubt if he'd ever speak to me again. And—and if things came to be like that between Douglas and me, I'd-I'd commit suicide! I would!"

"Doesn't it occur to you that you have committed suicide?"

"Does that mean that you're going to tell him? Then—then—"

Rushing to the dressing table, she took a tiny bottle out of a hand bag. I had her by the wrist the instant it was out of the bag-and the bottle passed into my possession.

"You wicked girl! You admit that you've behaved like a simpleton, and something worse. Do you imagine that you will prove your wisdom by this sort

of thing?"

"You may take that bottle from me if you like, but there are plenty of ways of killing myself. If you do tell Doug-

las---'

She left her sentence unfinished, but I had very little doubt that she would find out one of those ways if the truth were ever told. I resolved, then and there, that if I could help it, it never should be. After all, she was but a child; she had been still more of a child when that scoundrel had laid the trap in which he had caught her. It was not difficult to understand how desperate her position must seem to her. I was not excusing her, but I made up my mind that it should not be my fault if she had not a chance to prove that there was the making of a good woman in

"First of all, Lady Beatrice, you will hand me those rubies."

"What are you going to do with them?"

"I'm going to hide them in the park. An anonymous hint will reach Lady Sarah which will result in her discovering their hiding place. She will never learn from whom the hint came, or in whose possession the rubies were. Not a word will be whispered that will point to a thief's having been concerned in the matter. You will come with me to that palmist woman's rooms on Monday."

"Without the rubies? I daren't! I dare not! You don't know what he's like-what-what a brute he can be!"

"It's not a question of daring; I say you will come with me. I know what the Vicomte d'Aubry is like a good deal better than you do. He will hand you over your letters in my presence. You'll find that he won't even attempt to expostulate. That will be the last time in your life that you will either see or hear of him. Give me those rubies,

please."

She did not give them to me at once, but she did in the end. She clung to me when I left, imploring me not to breathe a word to Douglas; it was only about him she seemed to care. I doubt if she altogether believed me when I assured her that she need fear nothing. After she had gone, I went downstairs and said a few words to Lady Sarah. I begged her to excuse me from appearing among her other guests, especially as I should manage things much better if nothing were seen of me. She stared.

"But I thought you had to watch people's mouths and that sort of thing to see what they were saying. How can you do that if you can't see them?"

"It's a queer world, Lady Sarah. It's possible that I did all the watching of people's mouths that was needed before I came to Morebridge."

"But however could you? I don't understand."

"Our bargain was that you were to ask no questions and show no curiosity. Perhaps, in the course of a day or two, you will understand a little better."

I dined alone; spent the evening alone, and did some of the work that I had brought with me. There was a project on foot for founding, at the Hague, an institution for teaching the deaf and dumb by the oral system. I had been honored by being consulted in the matter; certain papers had been laid before me on which my advice was required. Until I had thoroughly mastered those papers, I knew perfectly well that I should not know a moment's peace of mind. I had brought some of them down to Morebridge House. I set about them, then and there.

The next morning I was witness of rather an odd little scene which took place in the breakfast room. Breakfast seemed to be a go-as-you-please meal in that establishment. I was having mine at a little round table, all by myself, when Lady Sarah Crawley came bustling in, and, crossing to Mrs. Baxter-Raeburn, whispered in her ear. The pair went together to a window. I saw both their faces.

"The most extraordinary thing has happened!" began Lady Sarah. "Look

at that!"

She handed Mrs. Baxter-Raeburn what I saw was a typed sheet of paper. "What does this mean? However

did you get this?"

"It came just now by the morning

post."

The lady read the paper through, and stared at Lady Sarah. She spoke with what was evidently considerable warmth:

"Some one, by way of giving me a lesson on the imprudence of leaving my jewels about, has taken them, by way of a practical joke, and hidden them. Do you know the tree the thing speaks of?"

"Not in the least; but the description is so precise that we ought to have no difficulty in finding it, if the thing ex-

ists."

"Precisely—if the thing exists; which, until it is proved, I shall take leave to doubt. Have you any idea

who this comes from?"

"Not the vaguest." Lady Sarah had not glanced in my direction; I wondered if she knew that I was there. "What we have to do, my dear, is to go and see if this is a hoax." She touched the sheet of paper. "If it isn't, and we do find the rubies hidden in the tree, what we shall have to consider is whether it wouldn't be wisest for us to keep our own counsel—to say nothing. You don't want to be made a laughing-stock, and I'm sure I don't. If ever I do discover the identity of this practi-

cal joker—he and I will have an account to settle. And I promise you it shall be properly settled."

As Lady Sarah was leaving the room, she perceived that I was there.

I beckoned to her.

"I think," I told her, "I must return to town this morning. As I explained, I have work that must be done, and, frankly, I shan't be happy till I've done it."

"I suppose——" But I did not let her get beyond those two words.

"The understanding was that you were to show no curiosity and ask no questions."

She stared at me as if I were altogether beyond her comprehension.

"It's the most extraordinary thing I've ever heard!" she said.

I believe she thinks so still.

I went back to town, did my workthat Hague scheme was one of the most fascinating I had ever encounteredand during the intervals that will occur, even when one is working one's hardest. I made certain arrangements. On the Monday I met Lady Beatrice Dacre at the point we had agreed upon, and together we went to No. 37 Airedale Street, the advertised address of the fool-snaring Clarice. Lady Beatrice looked lovely. She was exquisitely dressed; she held herself as proudly as any queen; but I knew that in her heart of hearts she was quaking with fear. I explained to her the program I had arranged. Her lips quivered, but she made only one comment:

"I feel as I used to when I was a small child, and was going to the den-

tist's."

"It isn't all joy, going to have a tooth extracted, even when one knows it's a very bad one, and that one will feel much better when the operation is over. Yet the dentist is not such a formidable figure, after all."

"But you don't realize," she said, "that during the last few months I've

never thought of the Vicomte d'Aubry except with fear and trembling, and that, night after night, I have lain awake shivering at the thought of him."

"After to-day you'll never be afraid of him again. You'll presently be pinching yourself at the thought that

you ever were."

In Airedale Street we encountered two men who gave one glance at me, then looked away. When I rang at No. 37, the door flew back, opened by an invisible hand. A neat young woman ushered us into a room at the end of a passage—a room that was decorated with the usual rubbishy paraphernalia of the professional clairvoyant. A big, flaxen-haired woman rose from behind a table. I addressed her.

"You are Clarice? I am Judith Lee. You will go behind that curtain and remain there until I tell you to come out. I have no doubt that you or your accomplices have played the listener there many and many a time before. After I have finished my business, you will have twelve hours in which to leave England. If, after that time, you are still on English ground, the consequences will be on your own head."

The woman withdrew behind the curtain to which I had referred without a word. Lady Beatrice seemed amazed. Almost immediately an unseen gong was sounded twice. sound had not died away when the door opened, and the Vicomte d'Aubry entered. At sight of me he stared; there was something in his eyes which suggested to me that he was not so easy in his mind as he would have liked to Lady Beatrice said nothing; I could see how closely her lips were pressed together, and how tightly her little gloved hands were clenched. I just looked at him, and in his uneasiness he began to bluster.

"What is the meaning of this person's presence here? I have told you

on more than one occasion that it's always absolutely essential that I should see you alone."

He spoke in French; I replied in

English-plain English:

"This is an occasion, my man, on which you will not see this lady alone."

I touched a bell that stood upon a table. A second man came through the door by which we had just entered—simply came into the room and stood with his back to the door. The vicomte's concern clearly increased.

"Who is this man? Where is Clarice? This room is privately engaged by me. Lady Beatrice Dacre, I require from you an explanation."

I replied for the Lady Beatrice:

"This, my man, is an inspector of police, of Scotland Yard. You have in the breast pocket of your coat four letters. You will be so good as to hand them to me at once."

He answered in English which, although it was spoken with an accent, was almost as plain as my own:

"So this is what you call a plant, is it? You think you've trapped me. We shall see. This is a conspiracy of which you will hear again, Lady Beatrice Dacre. Stand away from that door, sir, and let me pass."

He ignored me utterly; I was more attentive to him.

"You will either hand over those four letters at once, or I will have you arrested. I give you five seconds in which to make up your mind." I glanced at the watch at my wrist. "One—two—three—four—five. Inspector Ellis, arrest this man."

The thing was ridiculously easy.

"Here are your letters! What is all this fuss about them? I would have given them up long ago if I'd been properly approached, if I'd been treated with the courtesy that is due to a gentleman. It is to hand them over that I am here."

I said nothing to him; I spoke to the

girl.

"Will you be so good as to open that envelope and see if it contains what you require?"

She opened the envelope with fingers that I could see were shaking.

"Yes, they're—they're my letters."

"You're sure of that?"
"Quite—quite sure."

"This man has nothing else of yours? You're absolutely certain?"

"He-he can't have."

There was a stand full of matches on the table. Striking one, I held it out to her.

"Had you not better-"

Taking it from me, she applied the flame to the corner of one of the letters. When they were all alight, she laid them on a metal plaque on the table—for what purpose Clarice used it I cannot say. The letters made quite a little bonfire. When they were all consumed, I took a blotting pad and crushed the ashes into powder.

"That," I said, "is, I think, the end of them, and of Act One." Again a gong sounded twice. "That, I fancy, is the signal for the curtain to rise on Act

Two."

The vicomte's uneasiness increased;

he moved toward the door.

"You will now please permit me, sir, to pass, since this little matter is ended. I have business that requires my immediate attention."

I interposed. "If you will have a moment's patience, my man, I fancy that you'll find this is a friend to see you."

"But I do not wish to see him. I do not desire—"

Before he could conclude his sentence, there came into the room the man with the waxen face whom I had seen conversing with him at that restaurant within a hundred miles of Piccadilly Circus. Although he did not move a muscle, it did not need a very keen

perception to see that he found himself in the presence of the unexpected. He said in French, in tones of perfect suavity, as if there were nothing in the situation of interest to him:

"It seems that I have made a little mistake. A thousand apologies."

He turned to withdraw. Inspector Ellis blocked the way. I addressed him—in my usual plain English:

"I saw you the other night conspiring with this man to force a certain person, by means of threats, to commit felony. I need not tell you that this is a very serious offense; so serious that, for the common safety, I thought it wise to ascertain if anything was known of you. I found that a great deal was known." Again I touched the bell on the table. men came in-the two who had been strolling up and down the pavement. When he saw them, he almost changed countenance. "These gentlemen, who are members of the police in Paris, know a great deal about you. They are anxious to renew acquaintance with you."

The newcomers went close up to the man with the waxen face; one stood on either side of him. He looked at

the vicomte.

"Have I to thank you for this?"
The bitterness that he put into the question!

The vicomte blustered. "Upon my word of honor—" he began, but he did not finish; the other cut him short

with vitriolic scorn.

"Your word of honor!" He turned to the agents of the Paris police. "You will find me, gentlemen, at your service. I believe you have been looking for me some little time."

Compared with the vicomte, his manner was perfect. The agents smiled;

each took him by a wrist.

"That," I observed, "completes the second act. Now for the third and last." I struck the bell again; two women entered. One was the woman who had struck at the vicomte with her whip in the restaurant; she was cool with a deadly coolness. The other was a big, unwieldy female, who was in a state of hysterical agitation. Behind them were two policemen. At the sight, all the vicomte's bones seemed to turn to jelly; he became a mass of invertebrate pulp, presenting a spectacle such as I never wish to see again. Inspector Ellis moved toward him.

"I arrest you, among other things, for bigamy. I have a warrant in my pocket."

In another instant the Vicomte d'Aubry had a pair of handcuffs on his wrists, and stood between the two policemen, a pitiable wretch.

"Clarice," I called. The woman came from behind the curtain. A pretty picture she presented; her clients should have seen her. "You have now twelve hours in which to get out of England."

The waxen-faced man was the head of a gang of jewel robbers who had been wanted by the French police for some time. He was sentenced in Paris to a long term of imprisonment. The Vicomte d'Aubry met with the same fate in England. He was charged with marrying an amazing number of women, not only in England, but in most of the civilized countries of the world. He had swindled each of them in turn.

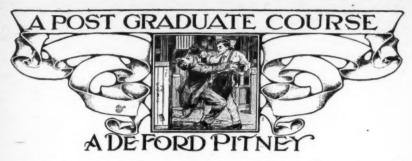
The day after he was sentenced, an invitation came to me to be present at the wedding of the Lady Beatrice Dacre to Mr. Douglas Forrester. In the envelope that contained the invitation was a scrap of paper, on which was written, in a sprawling hand with which I had lately become familiar:

I have just been reading the verdict and sentence in to-day's paper. To think that I ever could! At the thought of it I writhe! Shall I ever forgive myself? Mrs. B-R, told me the other day about the amazing manner in which she and Lady Crawley found her rubies in a tree in the park at Morebridge House. Shall I ever be able to repay you the debt of gratitude I owe you?

It was a question that I was incapable of answering. I felt, as I burned it, that it was rather a dangerous scrap of paper to inclose with a card for her wedding; and I caught myself wondering if she would ever learn to be quite discreet in the use of pen, ink, and paper.

Another Judith Lee story, "The Glass Panels," will be published in the April number of AINSLEE'S.





"College is the greatest thing in the world . . . but it's like bathing; you mustn't stay in too long or there's no reaction. After college there's life to react to, and that is done by forgetting books."—BONNIE R. GINGER, in this issue of AINSLEE'S.



OBERT PAGE had dressed himself with much care for his plunge into the commercial world. First impressions count for a great deal.

His high-crowned English straw hat, pushed back to the correct angle, his homespun business suit, buckskin gloves, brown boots, and bamboo stick, he thought, expressed just the right note of up-to-dateness and at the same time of commercial conservatism. When he got off the warehouse elevator, he stopped for a moment to look at the scene of his future triumphs.

"These high shelves are all-wrong," he said to himself. "There should be a mezzanine floor and tracks direct to the elevators. The goods here have to be handled too many times. Let me see now. Where would be the best place to have the pillars?"

He studied the situation. From a distance the foreman and one of the truckmen observed him pacing off spaces on the floor and measuring the tiers of shelves with his cane. Then he caught sight of the men and walked toward them.

"I guess this here must be one of the board of directors," hazarded the truckman. "Give a look at them yellow gloves, would ve?" "How do you do?" said Robert, smiling cordially. "I am Mr. Page. The office sent me down to go to work in this department."

The foreman laid his pen down on the rough, unpainted desk before which he was standing. He was a working person, with black shirt-sleeve protectors and with lines in his cheeks.

"Excuse me for a minute," requested the foreman. He walked over to a box of an office in a corner and called up the manager.

"Say," he queried, "there's a young fellow down here who looks like the Prince of Wales in disguise. He says his name's Page and that he's to go to work in this loft. What am I supposed to do with him? I'm afraid he'll get them clothes dirty up here."

The foreman listened to the reply, made a few notes concerning other matters that the manager spoke of, and then tramped back to his desk out on the floor.

"What experience have you had in heavy hardware?" he asked.

"Practically, you might say, none," replied Robert, smiling encouragingly. "But I specialized two years in shop efficiency under one of the best men in this country. I'm ready to take right hold with you."

"Did you come here to go to work or to take charge of the place?" asked the foreman.

"I came to go to work," replied Robert, reddening.

"Well, in that case I guess I could put you to work at getting the stuff in this wing straightened out."

"I'll be pleased to prepare you a report on the arrangement right away," said Robert, with businesslike directness.

"You can drag all those rolls of poultry netting over against the north wall and arrange them in a pile according to size. When you get that done, you can report for further orders," instructed the foreman grimly. "That's all the report I'll need from you to-day."

The truckman had been a fascinated listener to this dialogue. "Haw! Haw! Haw!" he howled, bending double and smiting his knee with his palm. "Haw! Haw! Oh, mamma! He'll make a report on the arrangement! A report! Oh, haw! Haw!"

"That will be about enough of that," admonished Robert sternly.

"What's the matter, Willie?" inquired the truckman, changing at once to offensive solicitude. "You don't think you're going to get sore, do you?"

Robert took an angry step forward, but there was a timely interruption.

"Flanagan!" called a voice of authority from the elevator, and the truckman started for the door.

"Good-by, Willie," he cried. "See you later." He waved his bale hook in ironic farewell.

"Get your coat off and get busy, Page!" commanded the foreman. "Get that wire piled up, and don't be all day about it. After this be here at eight o'clock. Folks working on this floor ain't supposed to drift in here at a quarter to nine and offer to prepare reports." The man didn't even give himself the trouble to make this a pointed

insult. He didn't seem to think Robert was worth it. The last sentence he threw over his shoulder as he walked away.

Robert stood by the desk a moment. Then he walked stiffly over to a row of hooks, pulled off his well-made, skeleton-lined coat and waistcoat, and rolled up his sleeves.

"I suppose they always have to haze a new man to break him in," he reassured himself. "Well, I'll show them there's no yellow in me."

Rolls of galvanized poultry netting are not very heavy, but they get monotonous after the first hundred or so; also, they have many projecting sharp points of wire that cut the hands and forearms. But Robert worked steadily and fast. Somebody came up behind him as he was piling a load on a hand truck, but Robert did not look around.

"What's your count?" asked the fore-

"Three hundred four-foot rolls, so far."

"That checks right. Bring fifty sixes over to the rear elevator. My name's Garner."

He walked off, tossing something on the loaded truck. It was a pair of greasy horsehide working gloves. Robert straightened his aching back and looked after the foreman. He started to throw the gloves at him, but changed his mind, put them on, and continued to stack wire.

Robert Page was in this warehouse as part of a well-considered scheme that he did not purpose to have upset by a lack of teamwork at the start on the part of the foreman. Not while Evelyn Copley was up in the main office qualifying as an assistant secretary, delving into the files with her beautiful hands and studying them with her sapphire eyes.

Robert and Evelyn had just graduated together. Evelyn was such a modern girl that she had insisted on grinding at the same courses of scientific management that Robert took. She started in business the same day that he did. They had had a very sweet talk about it at the university. Robert slammed the rolls of poultry wire around and glowed with the heat. He was waiting for Evelyn when the employees trooped out at five o'clock. He had hurried around from the warehouse elevator, while Evelyn descended leisurely with the office staft by way of the marble-and-gilt front entrance.

"Isn't it glorious?" said Evelyn enthusiastically, as they walked uptown. "Isn't it splendid that we can be in the same firm? It will give us so many chances to help each other. I can consult you if I get into a difficulty. You were so much better than I was on

office systematization."

"Glorious! Glorious!" replied Robert. There was a far-away look in his eye and a black streak on his collar. He had caught his trousers on a nail and there was a three-cornered snag on his right leg. He walked with that leg on the side away from Evelyn.

"It's so immensely interesting," continued Evelyn. "My work is going to absorb me. I can see such far-reaching opportunities in it. Mr. Beckwith is charming to me and gives me such

tactful encouragement."

"Mr. Beckwith! Are you in his office?"

"My desk is in the secretaries' office just outside his door. But he frequently comes out to consult with us. It's wonderful to be in close contact with a man who controls such a great enterprise. He's so forceful and yet so kindly and so thoughtful."

"Ouch!" Robert had changed his stick from his left to his right hand, and had accidentally touched a large,

sore blister on his thumb.

"What did you say, Robert? Oh, I thought you spoke. But I haven't

given you time to tell me of your work. You're in hardware and farm tools, aren't you? It must be really wonderful to be able to apply your knowledge to the arrangement and organization of such a vast collection of human necessities. Isn't it good that we can go to work immediately at big, fine things, applying to actual life the theories we've been studying the past two years? 'Organizing civilization,' Professor Mudd used to call it, you remember."

"It's fine!" said Robert.

He had been organizing kegs of nails on the fourth floor, and the assistant foreman had given him every encouragement to be systematic. The encouragement may not have been always perfectly tactful, but it had been easy to understand. Robert left Evelyn at the girls' club where she had her quarters, and walked on alone to his boarding house. Evelyn had a snug allowance from an estate. Robert had nothing but what he could earn. He considered his salary, and wondered how in the name of high finance he was going to live, bestow attentions on Evelyn, keep himself dressed, and lay up money.

He had been much interested in Evelyn's remarks about Mr. Beckwith, president of the jobbing corporation. Robert had not had an opportunity to make an extended analysis of Beck-Beckwith had listened glassily with. to Robert's genial greeting, had given him a glance, his letters another, and had passed him on in a breath to the manager who did the hiring and the firing. Robert had not witnessed Beckwith's reception of Evelyn. Beckwith had not cut her short. He had drawn her out. He had had abundance of time at her disposal. Evelyn was not only strikingly beautiful, she was also well bred and charming Her entrance into the business world was quite a social event.

Beckwith was a bachelor with two

neat mustaches-one on his upper lip and the other on his crown, where he parted the wisp of hair he had remaining in front. His sister, Mrs. Lawrence Greenleaf, was in society. Beckwith was very smartly turned out and very much occupied in being a man about town. He was a member of several clubs that were not very hard to get into. If Beckwith had a weakness, it was for the gentler or female sex of the well-known human species. He fell very hard, to use a figure of speech, for Evelyn. She found herself at a mahogany desk, her feet on a Persian rug, her tendrils gently stirred by a breeze from an electric fan, and her business path sunned by the full summer glow of Beckwith's tactful encouragement. Evelyn was in love with the office.

Robert in the morning punched the time clock on the fourth floor an hour before Evelyn was due to arrive. Some instinct told Robert that he would not need his bamboo stick, but he was dressed suitably to take Evelyn out to He located a house telephone while he was checking over a stock of cast-iron sash weights and rushed to scrub himself clean of grease and iron rust before the noon whistle blew. Then he hustled to the telephone near Garner's rough, stand-up desk, which was garnished with hooks on which dirty persons in checked jumpers spiked much-thumbed papers.

"I want to speak to Miss Copley in Mr. Beckwith's office," said Robert.

"Miss who?" asked the operator.

"Miss Copley."

"In Mr. Beckwith's office, did you say?"

"Yes, please."

The operator hadn't heard of Miss Copley. Robert's voice was so well bred that she could not tell who he might be, so the girl put the call on Beckwith's own desk. When Beckwith heard cultured accents asking for

Miss Copley, he hesitated a moment and then went to his door and smilingly summoned her to the instrument,

"I'm so sorry, Robert," replied Evelyn, seated in Beckwith's chair while Beckwith courteously stood and waited. "I've already made an engagement to lunch with Miss Laidlaw. We'll go a little later and won't have to hurry so much as you'll have to, poor fellow. We're going to the Shippers' Club. It's on the top of the Traffic Building. One has a wonderful view of the harbor from its windows. They have a number of women members. Isn't that fine? And Mr. Beckwith has offered to get me a visitor's card."

"That's jolly of him," replied Robert, compelling himself to speak heartily. "Corking, I call it. You must tell me about it when we see each other." Robert stepped back with the

wind taken out of his sails.

"Say, young fellow, any time you get through with this phone I want it," said his friend Flanagan, the truckman, shoving in front of him. "Whaddye think this is—a pink tea? Get out of the way!"

"Don't use this house phone again for anything but house business," ordered Garner. "If you have personal affairs to talk about, attend to them in

your own time."

Robert turned dark red at the rebuke from Garner. He wanted to kill Flanagan, but he didn't know how far Flanagan was privileged to go. He went out to his little lunch place, but he didn't eat anything. He sat with his chin in his hand and looked out of the window at the elbowing crowd of dirty, sweaty laborers slouching by in the shimmering heat.

"That was Robert Page, of my class," said Evelyn brightly to Mr. Beckwith as she hung up the receiver. "He came here to work yesterday, the same as I did, you know. I expect him to make a great success. He was wonderful

in the commerce classes. Professor Mudd said that his thesis on shop efficiency was the best he had ever read. We were much thrown together," added Evelyn reservedly.

"He should be greatly flattered at your interest," observed Beckwith.

"Oh, it was quite the other way at the university, I assure you," laughed Evelyn. "Robert Page was class orator and the star of the track team. If there had been a prize for the handsomest man of his class, he would have won that, too."

"Indeed!" said Beckwith. "Oh, in-

deed!"

While Evelyn was out at luncheon with Miss Laidlaw, an affair that Beckwith had engineered, Beckwith called

up Garner.

"Send that new man up to the top floor to examine the entire stock of three-dollar imitation-mackinaw jackets to-morrow," instructed Beckwith. "I want every one opened and looked over." Beckwith sat and rubbed his hands, smiling malevolently. "Handsomest man at the university, eh?" he gloated. "We'll see how handsome he is after he's pawed over the first thousand cheap mackinaws. And if he'd fall into the furnace and be burned to a cinder no bigger than a walnut, he'd still smell of mothballs. Evelyn! Oh, what a beautiful name is Evelyn!"

Robert meant to call on Evelyn in the evening. He laid out another suit and fresh linen, and stopped in the bathroom on the floor below his room and went seriously to work at his hands. He scrubbed them first with soap, then with souring soap, then with powdered cleaner and ammonia. In his room again, he found that he was tired as he had never been after an afternoon's football practice. He lay on his bed for a moment to compose his thoughts. When he woke up, it was half past eleven. Robert shed his clothes and crawled under the sheet.

The next thing was the infernal clamor of the alarm clock.

Robert smelled like a mothball long before he got to the end of his first thousand imitation mackinaws. loft under the skylight was the hottest place he had ever been in. He laid aside his clothing, garment by garment. Pink and brown filaments of shoddy stuck to him until he looked like a cinnamon bear. He was blinded by lint in his eyes and drunk with the smell of moth exterminator. about noon he took a chance on Garner's not knowing of it and called Evélyn on the house phone. He told her that he was tied up with some inspection work and couldn't get away for lunch. Evelyn said never mind. Beckwith got some of this on his line.

Beckwith made a little tour of the warehouse that took him up to the top floor. He did not get out of the elevator, but looked through the glass door at Robert coated with varicolored lint and standing in a pool of perspiration. Then Beckwith went down and happened to be going to lunch at the Shippers' Club at the same time as Evelyn. Beckwith had two long glasses of limeade and three portions of sherbet. Every time he put the cool drink to his lips, he had to stop to laugh. Evelyn inquired what was the joke. Beckwith said that he just thought of something that made him feel hot and at the same time was awfully funny.

Robert was unequal to making any effort to walk home with Evelyn that afternoon. The day, however, could not pass without a row with Flanagan.

"Look here, young fellow!" bawled the truckman. "The next time you pile up any chicken wire, stack it with the tags out. I never see such a bonehead way as that stuff was piled!"

"I did stack it with the tags out,"

cried Robert.

"You did like —," replied Flanagan. "Like — you did!"

Robert doubled his fists in his pockets and walked away. "I can't stand this much longer," he muttered. "If it weren't for Evelyn, I'd break loose and spoil everything." At the boarding house he got a little note from Evelyn, mailed in the afternoon, telling him that it was not en règle or comme il faut for him to call her up on the house

telephone.

Robert felt that Evelyn was slipping out of touch with him; that he was losing her. Their brave plans for daily walks and talks, like other college ideals, had shriveled up at the blighting touch of the world. He made a great effort, quitting work at the first stroke of the bell and rushing through his cleaning up, and managed to catch her for a walk home. It was not a success. They were out of harmony. Evelyn had a good bit to say of Mrs. Greenleaf, Beckwith's sister, and of a charming dinner at her Riverside Drive residence. Robert tried again the next day. He got a nod and a smile from Evelyn, as she stepped into a long blue motor car, assisted by Beckwith.

It was Tuesday before Robert found Evelyn at home. She talked with him in the drawing-room of the girls' club. She didn't feel like going for a stroll in the park, she said. It had been rather a tiring week; so many engagements in addition to her office duties.

"It seems like a hundred years since I saw you," whispered Robert as best he could amid the passings and returnings of the other girls. "I can't tell you how I missed you Sunday, the only real chance we've had for a good talk and visit."

Evelyn's reply lacked the tenderness of Robert's tone.

"I left Friday afternoon, you know, and spent the week-end at Mrs. Green-leaf's place at Cedarhurst. It's wonderful in that part of Long Island. We motored mornings, and some men came in evenings; several polo men-

delightful men. Mrs. Greenleaf has quite taken me up. And, Robert"— Evelyn was earnest—"you mustn't feel that you have to try to go out with me to lunch. I'm a member of the Shippers' Club now, and I find it is a useful place for me to go at noon. One meets so many business people there, as Mr. Beckwith says, that one would never meet socially in any other place. It's too bad, Robert, that you're not a member."

There were other girls receiving callers in the drawing-room. Evelyn's tone was insistently adapted to the superficial view of that circumstance, and Robert felt too unhappy to linger.

"I hope we'll be able to get together Saturday afternoon and Sunday," he begged as he rose to go. "I've been

wretched without you, Ev."

"You should go about more and meet more people," Evelyn counseled. "As for me, I'm engaged for the week-end at Mrs. Greenleaf's. I must try to have you meet her some time. You'd be sure to like her."

"I don't know anybody here that matters except you, and I don't want to know anybody but you," whispered Robert in the hall. The clerk was near, and girls were all about. "Don't believe too much in these people who've taken you up. They'll drop you again, Ev, like a hot potato."

"Good night, Mr. Page," cried Evelyn cheerfully on a high note. "So glad you found me in! Do come again."

Robert walked home tragically. "I've lost her. I've lost her already," he groaned. "These people have taken her away from me. I have nothing to live for. I've lost her—the only girl I ever loved, the one woman in the world for me. And to think that two months ago she would slip out in the dusk to the big oak by the lake and steal a kiss and rest her head on my shoulder!"

Robert smote the said shoulder in his

despair. A moisture came upon his cheek, and he started proudly. It was a tear. In years to come he would weep real tears, the scalding rain of agony that traces furrows in its course, but by that time the phenomenon would be more painful than interesting.

Robert could not stand it without meeting Evelyn again immediately. He beat the whistle the next day and was waiting for her as she came out. Beckwith was waiting, too, but he was in his car, and Robert was at the door. Evelyn couldn't well refuse. She smiled and waved her hand to Beckwith and walked home with Robert. As Beckwith put in the clutch of his car, he shot a pale gleam of the eye at Robert.

On his way uptown he occupied himself with thinking what was the most disagreeable task he could frame up for that pup the next day. Beckwith and one or two others of the chiefs who had cars usually kept their machines in the court of the building, which was reached by a corridor that led from the elevators. The corridor door opened on the steel-armored loading platform to which the trucks backed up. Beckwith took counsel with himself and grinned. He thought of just the way to let Evelyn see exactly what Robert amounted to in that establishment.

"Page," ordered Garner in the morning, "I want you to go down to the basement and go over the stock of horse and mule shoes. If there's any of the kegs broke open, put new heads in and paint the sizes on. Mr. Beckwith says he wants that job done up to the queen's taste."

Robert ground his teeth when he got down into the heat and grit of the basement and surveyed the ranks of kegs. "I wonder if this sort of infernal thing is what every new man has to do," he swore. "Did I have to go through college to learn how to do

this? I wonder if they're trying to make a show of me? Well, I won't quit! I can't quit while Evelyn is here. I only hope she doesn't know what kind of work I'm given to do."

Midway of the morning, Beckwith strolled through the basement. Robert picked up a hundred-and-sixty-pound keg of mule shoes, swung it to his shoulder, carried it across the aisle, and came back for another. Beckwith opened his eyes in surprise at Robert's strength, but smirked in his sleeve at sight of the dirt and sweat that blackened him. Robert saw Beckwith. He frequently had glimpsed his employer, but never had had a good opportunity for a chat with him. This seemed like a chance to get acquainted.

"How do you do, Mr. Beckwith?" he hailed genially, wiping his face with the back of his arm. "This stock's in fairly good shape, I find. I would suggest that the medium sizes of horseshoes be placed next the elevators so as to save one handling. Every handling you eliminate is—"

Robert stopped talking. Beckwith was moving on, not having deigned to give him a passing greeting, much less listen to his remarks.

"He didn't know me, of course," Robert said to himself when the blood had stopped drumming in his temples and he could think straight. "He didn't know me, and I couldn't very well run after him and tell him who I am, could I?"

A blast of the speaking-tube whistle interrupted. It was Flanagan.

"Put twelve kags of galvanized barbwire staples on the elevator and come up and help load them on the truck," said Flanagan. "Don't be all day doing it, Willie. You can get your finger nails manicured afterward."

 Beckwith's automobile was pulled up near the corridor door, and Flanagan backed his truck in behind it. Evelyn, with Beckwith and Miss Laidlaw, came out on the platform just as the staples were being loaded. Robert caught sight of her and tried to step out of eyeshot.

"Come on, you!" yelled Flanagan. "What are you dreamin' about? Roll

them kags on the truck."

Evelyn saw Robert, and started at the words. But she was not a girl to be taken aback.

"How do you do?" she said sweetly. Robert was rooted in his tracks with mortification, and she walked around him to where Beckwith was holding the

car door open for her.

When Robert came to Garner at four o'clock and told him he was through with the horseshoes, Garner praised him for his hard work and told him to knock off and call it a day. Robert was too tired to be pleased. He went to the shower bath and stripped. Garner, who was a considerate boss after a man had proved up, presently came in to him with a .clean roller towel. At sight of Robert under the shower, Garner opened his eyes There were plenty of strong men with big muscles around that warehouse-men who handle iron and load packing cases on trucks nine hours a day are not weaklings-but Garner seldom had seen a man with the perfect allround development of Robert.

Three months before Robert had been second man in the pentathlon in the intercollegiate games. He had lost first place because he was too heavy to score high in the pole vault and the jumps. His husky arms and legs were tanned saddle color and were bulky His big, lean torso and and hard. rugged shoulders were padded and banded with bulging muscles that glided and slid and swelled beneath the satin skin as he moved about beneath the streaming water. His neck was thick and solid, and across his abdomen the tissues lay in fleshless corrugations like an armor of ship cables.

"Great Scott, boy, where did you get all that?" exclaimed Garner.

"College," puffed Robert, snorting in the cold water.

"How much do you weigh?"

"Hundred and ninety-two, stripped."
"Well, I'll be dad-blamed!" remarked Garner. He sat on a stool and watched Robert get into his clothes and then returned to his desk, repeating to himself: "Well, I'll be dad-blamed!"

Robert was at the desk of the girls' club at seven that evening. Evelyn sent down word that she was dressing, but he said that he would wait. Evelyn assumed a chill air as soon as she saw his face. But Robert would have his say, although she listened reluctantly. It is strange how a man will persist under such circumstances when he knows perfectly well that it is no use. Perhaps it is human nature to wish to know the worst and get it over with. The manly, the impassioned, the pathetic, and even the tragic had their place in Robert's plea. Evelyn waited for him to get through, so she could make her own viewpoint clear.

"I could never consider myself anything but perfectly free," was her conclusion. "Of course, Robert, I trust that I'll see you occasionally. You must let me know how you're getting

on."

"I see. I get the idea. Good night, Evelyn," said Robert.

"Robert, you don't intend, I hope, to do anything foolish or ridiculous."

"Why, certainly not. Not at all. There's just one man I have to straighten up a little matter with, but that has no connection with this conversation. Good-by, Evelyn."

The pavement was a little uneven when Robert got out into the street, and the lines of arc lights wavered somewhat, but they soon settled to normal regularity, and he found that he was not as badly knocked out as he thought. When he got himself pulled together, his ruling emotion was anger.

"By George Washington!" Page clenched his fists. "Think what I've been through! Think what I've stood for!" He held up his scarred hands and looked at his broken finger nails by the light of one of the arcs in front of St. Patrick's Cathedral. "At any rate, there's no reason why I should submit to any more of this. There's just one thing that I'm going to do, and that is to have it out with that beast Flanagan. Thank goodness I can do that now! And then I'll tell the whole place to go to perdition."

Robert went across the avenue to the University Club, and found that a man he knew was in the house. During the remainder of the evening, he did not think about Evelyn. When he got up in the morning, he felt that he had lost something and was jarred for a moment when he recalled what it was. Then he remembered Flanagan, and a tonic wave of anger swept over him.

Garner was at his desk when Robert arrived.

"Have you got any more horseshoes to be dusted off?" inquired Robert. "If so, you might as well forget it. I'm through here to-night."

"Hell!" said Garner. "What are you quitting now for, when you're just getting yourself organized so you know

how to take hold?"

"I'm quitting because I'm quitting,"

replied Robert.

He went to look for Flanagan. The truckman was off with a load, and it was near noon when he and Robert met on the ground floor. Flanagan was carrying a box of bulk harness rings. Robert shouldered him. The box dropped, and the rings rolled in all directions.

"You objectionable person!" roared Flanagan. "You sanguinary mental defective! What did you do that for?" "I did it because I felt like it," said Robert shortly. "Come out here and I'll give you what's coming to you."

It was not necessary to repeat the challenge. Flanagan did not require an engraved invitation to an affair of that kind.

"Here I come!" he yelled.

"Come on, you piece of cheese!"

Robert, dancing on his toes, rushed, feinted, made Flanagan miss with a terrific swing, and sent his left hard to the jaw. Flanagan went back, and Robert followed with a right that was too high. The truckman received it without wincing and gripped Robert with both arms around his waist. He swung him into the air and hurled him heavily to the floor. Robert landed on his right thigh and hand, bounded to his feet, and was ready again. Honors even.

The moment he felt Flanagan's arms crushing him, Robert knew that he was up against the toughest proposition he would ever tackle. Flanagan was like a grizzly bear. He weighed thirty pounds more than Robert, and his arms were like logs. He was slower than Robert on his feet and had several recent glasses of beer washing around in him. These were the only points in Robert's favor.

Flanagan came on, and Robert waltzed away, sending in two harmless lefts. Flanagan missed with a right haymaker, grazed Robert's shoulder with a left, and nearly caught him with another right. Robert was so busy blocking and side-stepping that he was cornered before he knew it. He drove in a right with all his strength, but couldn't quite put it on the spot, and Flanagan clinched again, meaning to wrestle Robert to the cement floor and break one or two of his bones. Robert got his forearm under Flanagan's chin and put forth his might to break the hold. The two big men, grimly matching their huge strength in the silent grapple, were a grand sight.

After a terrific struggle Robert tore himself free. He backed away, but Flanagan was not to be denied. Robert partly blocked a right swing that landed with paralyzing force on his upper arm. He side-stepped another, but caught a left in the ribs that felt as if it had broken something. He went to his knee, gasping.

"Come on, everybody! Everybody run! Fight! Fight! Flanagan and the rah rah! Fight!" The truckmen and porters were yelling in wild ex-

citement.

"Go after him, Matt! Eat him up!" shouted one of Flanagan's supporters. "Kill the rah rah!" yelled another.

"Knock his block off!"

Robert was up again, warily sparring. His side had a stabbing pain in it, but he smiled nevertheless, the fighter's nasty sneer. This truckman should never thrash him, not in a thousand years, he swore inwardly. Flanagan wasted an attempt at a straight left that landed short on Page's chest. Robert countered hard on the jaw, took a swing on the shoulder, and uppercut twice as Flanagan came in. Flanagan stepped back and tried for Robert's jaw. Robert slipped the punch and landed a rattler on the short ribs. Flanagan grunted and swung again, the blow grazing Robert's head dangerously. Flanagan was puffing, but had not begun to slow up. Robert landed twice on the truckman's iron jaw, but failed to stop him. He pressed Robert with blow after blow. The men stood foot to foot and traded swings like longshoremen. Robert had been clever enough to avoid receiving a punch in a vital spot, but no matter where he landed on Flanagan, the blows didn't seem to do any harm. He began to wonder if he had it in him to hit this giant off his feet. Just then came a shout for Robert. It was from Gar-

"Stay with him, kid!" yelled the fore-

man. "Stay with him, boy! You'll get him!"

Robert began to back away, and Flanagan tore in to land a finisher. He missed half a dozen times, seemingly by an inch. This sort of thing was bound to weary him. He dropped his hands for an instant, and Robert drove in his right. It was no love tap, delivered while he was dancing away. He went with the blow. Flanagan did not drop, but he went back on his heels and his eyes turned in. Robert rushed with a left and another right-hander to the jaw. Flanagan threw his arms around him, and they went over together on the floor.

It was Robert who leaped first to his feet. He smashed twice as the truckman charged, gripping with his huge hands. Flanagan clinched again, but Robert's heart leaped with triumph as he found that he could break the hold. He pushed Flanagan off, stepped back, and was set for the punch of his life as the big man rushed, head down. Robert could not land on him. He uppercut with his left, backing away. Flanagan jerked up his head, and then Robert timed him with a right, the best blow of the fight. The truckman threw out his arms and fell flat on his back. Robert had accomplished the impossible-he had knocked Flanagan down. Flanagan's skull banged against the pavement, and he lay still. It was the fall that had knocked him out.

Garner took Robert by the elbow and led him to the washroom. He was too dizzy to hear the shouts of congratulation that greeted the conqueror. Garner wiped the blood off his face with a wet towel and helped him off with his

"Easy! Easy!" admonished Robert, his utterance thickened by his swollen lips. "I've got a bad rib, I think."

"Do you mean to say you finished Flanagan, and you with a busted rib?" marveled Garner. "Say, do you know that if you were a professional, you could be a rich man? How did you do it?"

"It was condition. I had my wind and he hadn't. He's twice as strong as I am. I couldn't break one of his ribs with an ax."

There was a shuffle of feet on the other side of the partition. Flanagan and half a dozen of his friends were coming in. Robert walked around to them. There was a moment of silence, and then he stepped forward and held out his hand. Flanagan took it.

"You're all right," he said. "You're

all right!"

"And you're all right," said Robert.
"We're both all right. No hard feelings, Flanagan."

"Not a bit, Page. You're all right.

I got nothing to say."

Robert went back to his locker and gingerly eased himself into his street clothes. Garner put his foot up on a bench and watched him knot his cravat.

"Where are you going after you

leave here?" he asked.

"Forget that," said Page. "I'm going to stick—I got started in this business and I'm going through with it. I

won't be run out of here."

"In that case"—Garner dropped his voice confidentially—"I'll tell you that we're going to have a new president after the first of the month. I want you for an assistant under me now, and it'll be your own fault if you're not boss of a department in the spring."

"That enables me to see the future a little more distinctly," replied Rob-

ert. "Come on and let's get some of this freight to moving."

The chairman of the board of directors and the general sales' manager had been among the spectators of the bout. They had rushed in and occupied ringside positions from the start to the finish, and at the wind-up their yells had been loudest. Evelyn heard the story when they rehearsed it to their envious fellow officials who had missed the show.

"Page? Page?" said the chairman.
"Could that be Page, the weight
thrower, the biggest point winner at
the intercollegiate games this year?
Do you know him, Beckwith?"

Beckwith played with his watch fob and looked out of the window.

"He's the Robert Page who holds the hammer record," volunteered Evelyn demurely. "We were in the same class. We—I know him very well."

"You shall introduce me to him, young lady." The chairman rubbed his hands. "If he has one-fiftieth of the horse power in his brains that he has in that right-hand punch, there's a big future for him here."

"Oh, he has! He has!" cried Evelyn eagerly. "He was one of the hardest students at the university. Why, I used to think he was the cleverest——" She

stopped.

Beckwith walked out of the office.

Evelyn did not marry Mr. Beckwith. As Robert intimated to her once, when he was not too busy with his department, he felt that this would be a great mistake.







HILIP WINSHIP climbed the narrow stairs to the Van Arsdales', and the weight of the lawyer's bag he carried was light upon his arm, but very

heavy on his heart.

From the top landing Chrystena glowed down upon him. To be sure, one does not become an heiress every day in the week. Bracing himself to meet her mood, he swung the long black bag before him like a censer.

"Aladdin's lamp," he said, smiling. Chrystena clapped her hands.

"Oh, isn't it absurd?" she laughed, and turned back into the living room, where the housewifely brushings of many cleaning days had taken the nap from the upholstery and the pattern from the rugs. She stopped and looked about her.

"It will change all this," she sighed rapturously.

Winship looked about him, too, at the shabby bareness of the place, and back again at the girl.

"It will change everything," he said. He set the bag down and began to open it.

Chrystena dropped down in the middle of a slippery horsehair sofa and clutched the arms of it and stared.

"I can't make it seem true. It's an awful lot of money."

"An awful lot," agreed Philip Winship. Chrystena sighed less happily, looking at the array of papers he spread out before her.

"Whatever am I going to do with it?"
Winship sat down astride a chair and swung the empty bag again before her.
"That's it. You ought to make it in-

teresting."

"But I have to be helped," she protested. "I can't do it all alone, and it's partly your responsibility. You've won it for me." Then, as the door behind her opened, she sprang up and waved a check book.

"It's come, little auntie. Philip's brought it, and to-morrow morning we'll tuck a thousand-dollar bill in each of our pockets and go hunt for bargains."

Mrs. van Arsdale, fragile and sweet, with the look of one having much stronger hold on the next world than on this, gave Winship a quick glance.

"You can't have your gilded coach so soon, Chrystena," he objected.

"Oh, never mind. We'll go like the poor, in taxicabs," she gleamed back at him. She slipped down on the treacherous horsehair and clasped her hands and rocked ecstatically. "And no more Greek and Latin grammar! No more maddening children with brains of wood! No more coaching, ever! Think of it! We'll get away from everything—the holes, the pinching, and the shabby rooms. Philip, I want a house."

"A dozen sent up on approval," he

promised promptly.

But his eyes again followed Chrystena's around the room, filled with a thousand memories. It hadn't meant to her, then, what it had to him, when they had sat on the slippery sofa, as if it had been a magic carpet, and circumnavigated the globe. Sometimes he had come in one mood, and sometimes in another, but it had always been a happy place to him. He glanced up and caught the vaguely troubled look in Mrs. van Arsdale's eyes.

"All this money without preparation,"

her glance seemed to say.

Chrystena caught the look, too, and

laughed.

"You wonder what I'm going to do with it? I don't know. Perhaps there's a place where they teach backward millionaires. But, anyway, we'll go this year to Mrs. Atterbury Martyn's dance.

No make-believe. We'll go."

Mrs. Atterbury Martyn, in their better days a neighbor, sent out cards for a dance at her country house, each year, to all the old up-State families. And each year they had speculated humorously over these invitations to the world to which they had been born, but for which they were not otherwise provided. Chrystena's wardrobe, in particular, had not lent itself to even a casual emergency of the social order: it consisted generally of the cloth gown she wore at school, a cotton or a challie for the house, and a mackintosh. But they had always made the most of the occasion, debating solemnly which of these she should wear; and once, last

"Do you remember last year, Philip?"

Chrystena laughed.

He remembered. They had had a party for themselves that evening, and had called it "Mrs. Martyn's dance." Winship had sent in flowers and ice cream, and had brought up two beaming Italians with a hand organ and sta-

tioned them on the landing outside, while he and Chrystena had danced. Supper had been served, for the three of them, on an old mahogany table, in need of repair, but beautiful in line, decorated by silver candlesticks and his roses in a Canton bowl.

"How absurd you children were!"
Mrs. van Arsdale smiled at them softly.
"Will you never stop playing games?"

"Not if we can help it," Winship said. And Chrystena added: "We finished out of doors. I hope the night will be

as fine this year."

The night last year had been fine. After the players had been dismissed, still keeping up the game, he had taken her out to the balcony that served as a fire escape, and they had watched the Italians trundling their organ home through the street below. There, silent beneath the stars—which shine very nicely even on a fire escape—quite happy, for the make-believe of it seemed to him much finer than the make-believe of the Atterbury Martyn circles, he had stood in rich content beside her, until Chrystena had sighed.

"Tired?"

"No-I was thinking of the real dance to-night."

To Winship this had been intensely real.

"You'd like to be up there at Mrs, Martyn's?" he had asked slowly.

"Of course," she had said impatiently. "I want to know the feeling of it—the lights, the music, and the glamour, and all the different sorts of partners. I like things brimming over. I want to know what plenty's like."

Now Winship came back to the present. Would she find out? He bent down to put back some papers. Never, perhaps, would she hold it all as she held it at that moment—the Glory of the World, the Haven of Heart's Desire, the Delectable Mountains; these things and others were safely held in the long black bag, secure within her grasp—for

this one moment. He swung it again to her hands.

He was halfway down the stairs when he heard Mrs. van Arsdale calling him. He ran back, as he supposed for some forgotten errand, but she drew him in.

"I've sent Chrystena off. I want to talk to you."

The last thing in the world he wanted was to discuss Chrystena. He tried to take it humorously.

"Oh, money's exciting at first, but that'll wear off."

"You know that isn't the core of it. Her world's turned upside down, and who's to help her?"

"There's Mrs. Atterbury Martyn." Philip grinned uneasily. "She'd love to act as fairy godmother. Of course, Chrystena's got to know people," he added vaguely.

"It's people I'm thinking of," Mrs. van Arsdale interrupted. In her eyes Chrystena appeared defenseless, set upon by the whole footpad tribe of drawing-room adventurers, perhaps to be finally captured by some hunter bolder than the rest; while between her and this fate there stood but one old woman, too long out of the world to know the ways of it.

Winship took this restlessly, with an agitated prowl about the room, as if he expected to find the things she spoke of lurking beneath the table.

"She has to be launched, Philip. She has to be protected," Mrs. van Arsdale repeated. "I'm not able. Though there's nothing in the world I wouldn't do for her."

"Same here," said Philip Winship.

Mrs. van Arsdale rose and slipped her hand beneath his arm, as he stood looking down the street.

"Then-Philip?"

He covered her hand with his own, flushing beneath her long look.

"You care?"

"I do." He said it as if it had been the marriage service. "There isn't any one for me but Chrystena. I've always hoped. But there was Bob to put through college, and—family things. Now the law is going pretty well, and I'm free, But——"

"You won't ask her?"

"A man couldn't, not with all that money," he repeated doggedly.

"Oh!" the little woman beside him said impatiently. "Then love is so small a thing it can be snuffed out——"

"By a pair of gold snuffers? Not by a long shot, not mine! But Chrystena's different; she must have her chance for choice. I was always the one who cared."

"How can you be so sure when you haven't asked her?"

He flinched at that, but he did not waver.

"Then it is Mrs. Atterbury Martyn who must help us," Mrs. van Arsdale said

A few days later, over the telephone, the voice that he cared for most in the world came to him.

"Philip? Can you go out with me?" And when he did not answer instantly, it said again, this time a little bit aggrieved: "It's Chrystena, Philip, and I want you to go shopping. Our annual shopping, before Mrs. Martyn's dance,"

He had, indeed, always gone shopping with Chrystena, when the process had been pure exercise of the imagination, and the things they had shopped for had stayed in the windows. They had shopped to give people everything they naturally wouldn't get-had sent Mary, the charwoman, marrons glacés, and the bootblack's mother a pair of pink bedroom slippers. They had shopped for Chrystena, too-all without ever going inside-and, flattening their noses sociably together against the windowpanes, had chosen pendants and tiaras with a rich discrimination.

There had been definite rules to the game; Winship had made them and kept them. He was adept; he had never forgotten, from window to window, what had been bought at the last. He had been very particular that things should match, and very firm with her when she wanted others that might be good to look at, but were not suited to her. He had played it well upon the surface, and underneath with warm, happy tremors and hot and cold shivers of joy, as he had thought of how one day he would really buy things for Chrystena -one day, when the trade in law should justify him in asking her to belong to him.

Now the fun would have gone out of it, since Chrystena would, in cold, everyday fact, buy what she wanted without any help of his. A fact was a dull sort of thing compared with the irridescent bubbles of make-believe. He could not see how they would shop to-day. But, of course, he went.

She met him with a glow in her eyes, a holiday plan in her mind—and was there something else? She came to him, bewitching, still in her shabby old clothes, and bubbling over. He looked her over swiftly to disentangle this new thing—it wasn't external, whatever it was—and then spoke, to stop the ridiculous pounding of his heart against his ribs:

"You don't seem to have been very

busy. Haven't you been out?"

"We went, but I just looked. There wasn't anything big enough to buy; I didn't want to take the bloom off. But if you don't like me as I am, in my old clothes——"

He reassured her. But he didn't look at her again; he didn't dare.

"Don't you want to take a cab, or a taxi?" he asked.

But Chrystena wouldn't have it.

"Oh, let's go as we always have. You —haven't any sentiment."

From the first it did not go. A shop

window was nothing but a shop window, when anything you liked might, prosaically, be yours. Winship could not match her spirit. Rather heavily, when Chrystena wanted to buy a purple silk Japanese dressing gown for the bootblack's mother, he pointed out to her that it would not accord with the pink slippers of the year before. And the assistance that he gave in helping to select a sortie du bal for black Maria, who did his rooms, showed for the bald and labored effort that it was. windows, evening cloaks, black Marias, all were as important to him as the nebular hypothesis. He went on talking as if he were making an address to the jury, in a case of arson. Their play was dead: he wished Chrystena would admit it and have done.

He dragged her on past shops and shops. He managed to elude a dozen impulses of hers to stop, notably at a leather place where he knew she wanted to "shop" for him. But finally she was

not to be denied.

An Egyptian necklace had caught her eye. It was a place where they show odd, individual, curious adornments. Winship looked without enthusiasm, while Chrystena chattered, her eyes straying about the place. Then there was a light, quick pressure on his arm, a little exclamation from her, and his eyes followed hers.

She was looking at a rare diamond in a tray of rings. It was hoarded in its setting as if the morning dew, glistening in a sunrise, had been caught and crystallized. It was that symbol of eternity, the circle; the symbol, too, of human happiness, the little endless loop with which we strive to inclose and guard our happiness. It was unmistakably a perfect ring to serve for an engagement.

They both stared for an odd, silent

moment. Then:

"That's a nice ornament for a newmade heiress to buy for herself. That's big enough to begin on, isn't it?" Philip muttered, stupidly, tormentedly.

Chrystena whirled about on her heel. "Perhaps we'd better do our shopping

in a cab, after all."

The town swept past them and around them, full one moment of the heart of things and the next of the emptiness of them; full of drudgery and fleeting hopes, of love and turbulent misery.

Once or twice Chrystena glanced up, and once she said: "Did I take you away when you shouldn't have come, Philip? I couldn't have gone shopping alone—"

Winship roused himself. "Splendid idea," he said. "But what are we out for now? A yacht or an opera house?"

She shook her head. "Oh, not something merely big. You're stupid. I want to be sure I own the lamp."

Her voice was not quite secure; it broke a little. He hurried into speech, for suddenly he saw she was shopping for human happiness.

"We'll tell the man to drive to a toy shop for grown-ups."

She turned that over in her mind.

"What should we see there?" she asked hopefully.

"Oh, I don't know—little toy enterprises for the men, I guess. And makebelieves and hearts—the kind that you play tunes on—for the girls."

She sat silent, looking straight ahead, and it was not until she spoke that he knew he had hurt her.

"Why did you have to be horrid today of all days, when I want——" She broke off, her eyes searching the streets to the right and left of them.

"There must be such delightful things somewhere—or else what's the use?" She glanced at him again. "A little farther down there's a shop where you can buy illusions at wholesale. I saw the sign."

"Iffusions won't wash," he objected

absently. He was wondering how it would be when other men went out with her.

"That's the reason you buy at wholesale," she retorted. "Then you can always have them fresh. You are dull to-day, Philip."

He knew that he was dull, and he would have done anything not to be. But something kept saying to him: "This is your last good time, your last!" so that it was no good time at all.

Again she was looking down the side street.

"Along here, some time ago, I saw a shop that said, 'Spirits rectified.' I always meant to go. Perhaps you could get new sets of humor for your friends; some people's are so badly worn, they need reheeling like a pair of shoes—the way yours are now, Philip. Or we could have one's whole mind done over —barnacles taken off; so that one could go again at a hundred knots an hour."

"You poor old thing!" He was laughing at her with something like his normal manner. "The figures are mixed, but it doesn't sound as if your ship had

just come in."

She turned her eyes upon him, flickering with strange lights. And in a

minute she began again:

"Oh, but there ought to be a place where you could get big, stupendous things. I want—" She flung out impatient hands. "See here, you watch the advertisements on one side of the way, and I'll take the other. We'll look for corner lots in Arcady and the Apples of Hesperides—"

To Winship, a voice within kept calling out the minutes, like the man in a railway station who calls trains. He kept no sort of watch, and Chrystena turned a reproving and triumphant finger up-

ward

"On your side of the street, too-and you never saw!"

The sign above them read: "Talent furnished for all occasions," and he

grinned a little, first at the sign and then at her.

"Well, there you are. Shall we stop?"

She shook her head, dispirited. When ever before had she had to play her

game so much alone?

"No, I don't think I want any to-day. How do you suppose it comes—on disks or cylinders? And what would happen if the record gave out wheezily in the middle of a crucial moment? Suppose you wanted a talent for—for telling some one you loved them, and the record stopped in the middle of a proposal, and you couldn't put it through until they got another? No, I think it's too risky." Then she faltered queerly and flushed. "We don't want any more of this," she said. "Let's go home. I've got to dress for the dance, you know."

Winship gave the order, full of angry reproach at himself. He felt that she had tried to reach him, and he had failed her. He had done nothing except take the bloom from her first day's

shopping.

There seemed little reason to doubt, that night, that this was a party. The Atterbury Martyns were very gorgeous,

very glittering, very big.

It was the first time Philip Winship had seen Chrystena glorified, as a few yards of satin, skillfully disposed, can glorify the greatest charm. She came across the wide hall slowly, and his heart shook at the vision of her loveliness

"Where did you get that air you're wearing?" he mocked, to drown his wonder at her young magnificence. "From a bankrupt duchess? Oh, you can't trust these nouveaux riches!"

Next minute he was watching Mrs. Martyn turn colored lights upon her socially, as if she were the fairy princess of a Christmas pantomime. She had plainly cast her nephew for the part of

prince, and Richard Martyn was ready for his cue. His good looks fitted him for the rôle, and they seemed to recommend him to Chrystena.

She seemed to have an instant success. People kept discovering her, like

the plum in Jack Horner's pie.

"How clever she is!" they told Winship. Told him! "And how charmingly pretty!" She hadn't needed a gold

frame for him to see that.

His look searched the room in critical discontent. He examined Chrystena's partners with the combined disregard of a bachelor uncle and an ambitious mother, and found them poor sticks, every one. They weren't good enough to dangle on her chatelaine. Some he knew by reputation; some he played tennis with at the armory; some he knew at the club. All well enough there, but he reflected that men made a very poor show-down, when it came to matrimony. The man she had danced with last collected snuffboxes. Some people might consider that a blameless life. Winship did not. He couldn't see Chrystena living out her life with snuffboxes. Neither, to be honest, did he like to see her dancing, as she was doing now, with Richard Martyn.

Winship moved off restlessly. hadn't known that it would be as bad as this. But if he couldn't stand the preliminary fire, what was going to happen to him later? He went out to smoke on the cool, moonlit veranda, looking up at the serene night and the starry vault above. But that did not help at all. In a world like this, where money set all sorts of men swarming around a girl like bees around a honey pot-in a world like this, a starry vault just rubbed it in. He turned again to look in at the great house. Always there was too little or too much. For himself he preferred, materially, too little. If he could have wished away all this resounding place, he would-everything but the starlight and the distant music

and Chrystena beside him. But the lamp was hers, and would not work for any wish of his. He went back to the music.

He danced, and he made bitter jokes of a kind that were foreign to him. Every time he came near Mrs. Martyn he heard her chanting Chrystena like a Coney Island barker. And when he moved near Chrystena and the circle of her successively unsatisfactory partners, he was moved to his worst pitch. She was always laughing; she was shimmeringly gay; she was unjustifiably, outrageously beautiful. With her bringing up, Chrystena should have known better.

"You dance as if you were wound up with something," one girl complained to Winship, "and not wound up well."

Then he claimed his dance with Chrystena. For a minute he forgot; for a happy space he might have been gloriously floating over rough old floors, surrounded by the Van Arsdales' ancestral horsehair furniture, to the blessed airs of a rented hand organ.

"Tell me," said Chrystena's voice, "who is Richard Martyn?"

Winship was back on the Martyns' ballroom floor. Who was Richard Martyn, indeed? The man was like the chandelier above them, capable of gleaming expensively and well fitted to his place. As an expensive ballroom requisite, he was admirable.

"He's Mrs. Martyn's nephew," he said out loud.

Chrystena accepted this in the silence it deserved.

"He dances well," Philip offered next. And to this Chrystena made the practical reply of gayly welcoming Martyn, as he came to claim her.

Winship turned away again and resorted to the conservatory. There was a large fish pool in the center, and a marble seat beside it. Upon this he sat him down and gazed at his own reflection, grinning at his image sourly.

"So this," he said, "is jealousy! Well, I don't think much of you or your appearance, Philip Winship. With all the feelings you have had to-day, it should be plain as an electric sign on Broadway. But you look merely smug. And here you're growing dotty, turning into a Narcissus and talking into pools!" He drew back impatiently and moved along the seat.

Beyond him, across the pool, there was the sound of voices and a stir among the palms, and he caught a glimpse of Chrystena's gown as she passed, still escorted by Richard Martyn. They moved out of sight together.

"Philip," said Chrystena's voice beside him.

He turned sharply. She was alone. "What are you doing here? Tired?"

he asked, as he had asked a year ago on the fire escape.

Again Chrystena sighed. "No," she said, "but I want—I want the real party."

"You contrary piece! Last year—"
"Last year I had you with me. Tonight, the few times you've danced with
me, you've been miles away. Nothing
has happened as I thought it would."

"What do you want to happen?" He bent down to her. "Chrystena?"

Chrystena answered nothing. Very softly, very politely, as if, after all, she remembered that she was at a party, Chrystena began to cry.

It broke his heart. In desperation he looked about him. The palms appeared to rustle in discreet amusement, the gold-fish in the pool flipped quizzical tails up at him, the rippling water offered him no counsel but a bland reflection of the lights above. Nothing without him helped. He looked within. He was Philip Winship, attorney and counselor at law; and he knew no law but that of his necessity. He turned to Chrystena and met a glance glowing, beneath

her tears, like a sudden rainbow. He flung his arms out to her.

"Chrystena, you've no business to look like that. I shall lose my head."

He lost his head; he lost his principles; he lost himself in one great moment. All his fasting, all his aching loneliness went into it. Chrystena, flushed with radiant amazement, drew her head back, and looked at him.

"Philip," she wondered deeply, "this

-this-you?"

He laughed and drew her head back. "Some of me. I've never showed you? I bottled it up so well? Oh, come—I

suppose you never even smelled the sealing wax? Well, I put the cork in tight upon myself, and then I dug a deep hole in the garden and put a ton of everything that I could find on top of that. And then—then it was all in my eyes every time I looked at you."

And though it was rather early for them, being about one o'clock of a November night, the morning stars agree-

ably began to sing together.

"I like things brimming over," Chrystena quoted. "I want to know what plenty's like."



## PRAYER FOR PEACE

ALL battles are in vain, All wars betrayed; What peace do men attain Without Thine aid? In flame and rolling drums, In vanquished breath, Upon Thy children comes The Peace of Death.

Lord God, we pray of Thee
Thy light to shine,
Till blinded nations see
The help divine.
Then Love shall once again
Hush all the strife,
And there shall come to men
The Peace of Life.
McLandburgh Wilson.





SSUMING that the saving of a human being from drifting into inevitable lifelong misery may be termed saving a soul, I submit that I have seen a

soul saved from hell by a photograph. Not that there was anything of the occult about it. The facts of this story of him and her were everyday enough.

They date back to the time when I was thirty—to the days when I lived on Madison Avenue in honest-to-goodness bachelor quarters, just around the corner from my office. I shared the quarters with Tad himself—that is to say, with the "him" in the case. And rest assured by me—who practically grew up with him—a "tad" he surely was. If there were any high spots that he had not touched, it was only because of his having jumped over them on his hurried way.

And yet, by the same token, he was a real man, was Tad. I never knew him to do a mean thing in all his life. He was constitutionally too full of sympathy to be able to. Very possibly it will be thought that he was too full of it for his own good. But there it was. And with it—in fact, responsible for it—a faculty of really knowing folks. More than any man I ever saw, Tad had the great, rare gift of understanding. To an almost uncanny degree he had a faculty of seeing clear to the bottom of people.

But character sketching does not fin-

ish a yarn. This thing I am talking about began after Tad and I had been holding down our Madison Avenue quarters for about three years.

Before we come to the picture and its salvation work, however, the picture itself needs a little leading up to. We will have to go back to the advent of her whom I will call the "first" woman—for, in its way, it was one of those triangle affairs. There comes into it, later, the woman whom we will call, for the present, merely the "other" woman.

But let the first woman come first—a lady whose acquaintance I made most unexpectedly on a stormy February night just ten years ago. I had come home from giving a lecture at the medical school, about ten o'clock that evening. And I had come home dead tired. Tad was out, and I had settled myself restfully before the fire for a peaceful hour with a novel before turning in. I was in that "all-in" state of mind which asks only to be left alone. Small as my want was, however, I had only just begun to forget the world when I heard Tad's laugh in the hall.

Now Tad had several varieties of laugh, and I knew them all by experience. I easily recognized the present brand as the merriment of Tad making port with a cargo. Wherefore I realized that the only quiet I would get this night would be when Tad stopped talking to get his breath. On such occasions it was his invariable wont to turn

himself into a vocal post-mortem guidebook anent his evening's itinerary. It was never any use fleeing precipitately to bed in self-defense. He would unignorably sit on your chest, with the cheerful assurance that he must tell all.

This time, moreover, I was doomed not only to be told, but also to be shown. When the door opened, I beheld, standing on the threshold before me, the fair partner of his festival herself; and then I heard Tad's voice declaiming:

"Where are the maids of yesterday? The winter's blown them all away."

"That is to say," he added, "all except this lady. Welcome Miss Lou Sum-

mers to our city, old top!"

I looked at Miss Lou Summers and beheld much what you might expect: very golden hair, emphasized eyesblue, as it happened-and, of course, well-enameled cheeks. I noticed one thing about her face, though, that was rather startling. She had a nice mouth. It was decidedly out of keeping. But otherwise Miss Lou Summers was unmistakable-of the type to be seen performing their breadwinning duties nightly among the cheaper cabarets of Broadway, and observable later in the evening partaking of a morsel of broiled lobster in more or less congenial company at some glittering crustacean conservatory; the congeniality of the escort generally depending on his spending power rather than on his personal charm. A girl must have some of "the lights." Incidentally, to judge from the shade of the circles under her eyes, the game had begun to tell on this particular lady pretty heavily.

Lou Summers-a name oddly suggestive of the improvident grasshopper of fable-and Tad favored me with their vivacious company that evening for the better part of an hour. And then, the spirit of unrest having moved Tad to venture on again, Miss Summers kindly invited me to fare forth with

them-urged me to "stick round and get a red nose." When I declined the pleasure on the ground of weariness, she smilingly admitted my good sense, adding that as regarded Tad and herself, however, they might as well be crazy as the way they were-and so

departed into the night again.

I can see them going down Madison Avenue now-I watched them from our window-both bent forward, arm in arm, against the driving snow; her long, loose coat flapping riotously in the wind in company with Tad's own perturbed ulster. And as I stood there looking at them, I suddenly felt sorry for Miss Lou Summers—a sort of feeling of the damnable waste going on in the world; a reflection that sent me to bed in a condition even more melancholy than I had been before the merry couple's appearance.

I don't suppose, though, I gave the incident more than two more thoughts until a week later, when I ran into Tad. about three o'clock one afternoon, escorting Miss Lou Summers up Broadway. When I had asked him to meet me for lunch that day at two o'clock. he had excused himself on the score of being too busy-giving me a distinct impression that he would be detained by ordinary businesslike business-which escorting Miss Summers wasn't.

Tad had never before attempted to pull the wool over my eyes like that. His having tried to now set me thinking again. I twitted him about it afterward, but he only smiled and said he would never do it again, please. the same, though, I noticed that he was still a bit embarrassed about my discovery-which did not serve to soothe my curiosity any. It was not like him to be embarrassed about these unconventional adventures of his. Nevertheless, he kept his word. With a sort of sarcastic grimness which puzzled me, he kept me informed as to subsequent forgatherings with Lou Summers, forgatherings that became more and more

frequent.

And the more frequent they became, the more curious I got. And for this reason: I noticed that as often as not he seemed content just to be rationally talking with the girl. He would talk to her as he would have to a girl of our own class and culture without—well, without seeming in the least to be as restricted in topics as one usually is with a Lou Summers. He often brought her to our rooms after they had dined together—Lou's cabaretian duties had been suspended shortly before this time—and we would sit around for an hour or so of rambling chat.

Presently, as this sort of thing went on, I noticed something in Tad that I did not half like. There came a time when, after he had seen Lou home at the conclusion of one of her conservative visits, he would come back and sit around without a word, just thinking, as if I had been a thousand miles away instead of in the same room with him. As time went on, and this habit of silent pondering after each visit of Lou's grew more pronounced, it began to get on my nerves. Granting that there possibly was a little more worth thinking about in Lou than you usually find in her type-Lou, by the way, spoke good English in a decent voice—nevertheless I couldn't see any good in Tad's putting so much back into it. Not that I didn't realize that Tad was balanced with a respectable amount of worldly wisdom; he had amply improved his opportunities for reading as he ran. Still, the more I saw him fall into those cussed thinking fits, the more it rawed my nerves.

I wasn't more than half well then, anyway—that spring, as a matter of fact, I had to pull out into the open for a year to patch up a bad case of overwork—and that doubtless made me touchier than usual. Whatever it was, it finally got too much for me.

One night, when Tad, having come back from seeing Lou home, just sat there silently thinking, thinking, I fidgeted and glared at him until at last he couldn't help noticing it. He asked me what the devil was the matter.

"Oh, nothing!" I growled. "Except that I was wondering if you weren't giving more time to that lady than is

worth while."

"Bore you?" asked Tad. "We'll play somewhere else, then. I have been imposing on you, that's a fact."

"No," I said, looking at him pointedly, "she doesn't bore me. On the contrary, she rather worries me."

He saw right off what I meant, and gave me a long, slow stare. And then he laughed.

"Think I'm losing my head over Lou, eh?" He smiled. "Afraid I'm going to make a fool of myself, are you? Don't be an ass, old top! I haven't lived thirty-two years without having a little sense stung into me."

That helped some; although I had never understood that there was any age limit to man's privilege of making a damn' fool of himself. But about a week later-or about six weeks after Lou had first swung into my ken—came something that comforted me more. When I came in, one blustering March evening, I found Tad sitting alone in front of the fire, gazing gravely up at the mantelpiece. Following his gaze, I saw a picture—the picture; the picture, in short, of the "other" woman in the case-or, rather, the girl; and, from my point of view, the picture of a ministering angel. The mere sight of her sort of made me hear the song of birds in May.

It was a cabinet photograph, framed in gold, of a girl of barely twenty, with the sweetest, honestest eyes in the world—the sort that look right at you; eyes that looked out at the world bravely—with all of life still before them. Hers was the kind of face that immediately

made you believe in woman as an institution for the highest good—no matter what you might have thought before. Just to look at it made you feel glad all over.

Who she was I did not have the least Furthermore, she was so obviously the sort of girl to lead Tad clear of the various Lou Summers of this world that I was quite satisfied without knowing-contented merely to thank the gods that this girl who had just presented her likeness to Tad had come to the front so providentially. To be sure, I blurted out something as to who she was, and Tad colored up and mumbled her name, but it meant nothing to me. I had never heard it before. And Tad did not pursue the subject. fact, he closed it right there by picking up a book and starting to read it upside down. And I let it go at that. His attitude struck me as natural enoughand as a good sign in itself.

Sages have said that it is the woman who pays—and pays. They might as well have made their sageness complete by adding that a man can count on doing a little disbursing himself—in one way or another. Men like Tad, especially—though not usually in the way Tad finally did pay. However, this is, where the picture began to work.

To get a real idea of how it all worked out in front of me, it will be better to think of the picture as I came to think of it—as something more in the nature of a living being than a photograph, as a human personality that was fighting Miss Lou Summers to the death for Tad; Tad figuring in all of this both as the stake and as the torn battlefield over which the combat waged.

I have said that the picture had appealed to me as a ministering angel in time of stress. It was not long, nevertheless, before I began to wonder if my ministering angel would not have to do some rather stiffer fighting to win out

than I had thought at first. For Lou continued to come around even after the advent of the picture; although, in one way, the circumstances of her visits had changed. As often as not, she came now of her own accord, without being brought by Tad himself: which was consoling, as far as it went. Incidentally, there was another change which I noted in the situation—a change in Tad's manner toward Lou. He was gentler, somehow, and had lost his old jocular easiness with her; a change naturally welcome, of course, as the first sign of his intention to cut loose from the lady.

The mere fact that—with this wonderful other girl at his elbow—he had to work himself up by degrees to cutting loose from Lou did not worry me. Knowing Tad as I did, it was quite understandable. I knew that he had seen what I had seen myself—that Lou had come to care for him, really care, with all the starved hunger of her errant heart. Wherefore I knew it was only natural that there should be some delay before Tad could subdue his habitual volcanic sympathy for the under dog sufficiently to be able to send poor, yearning Lou to the right-about.

There was something, though, that did worry me. It was Tad's continuing to seem really glad to see Lou. The minute she would show up, a light would jump into his eyes that was not born of kindness at all—it was unmistakably the light of spontaneous welcome. But if I did not like that, I was soon enough to see something I liked a big sight less.

I had gone to bed one night, leaving Tad in our sitting room reading—or pretending to read. After sleeping an hour or so, I awakened with a feeling of something having happened, and then noticed that my door had been blown open. Probably the cold draft from my open window had roused me.

My bed was in such a position that I had full view from it, through the open

door, of that part of the sitting room where Tad was. I saw him still sitting before the fire, but his book had dropped to the floor beside him. At first I thought that he had dozed off in his chair. But then I saw that his eyes were open and that he was gazing up at the picture. It was up on the mantelpiece where he always kept it. His face was not in the least the typically enraptured face of a man looking at the girl of his heart. It was set and white. And yet there was in it that look of worship which one feels for all young maidenhood, only it was a look of worship strongly mixed with pity-a pity that I couldn't understand.

As I watched him, his hand wandered to his necktie. When he took it away again, I saw in his fingers his scarfpin. Suddenly he pressed his lips to it; then buried his face in his hands. The scarfpin was one that Lou had given to him.

When a man of over thirty, who has had the romantic nap rubbed off of him, kisses a woman's keepsake, it's time to take notice. For the first time I realized how bad things really were with Tad. Before this I had worried a little. Now I really got scared. It was then that I came to look at the picture as a living force—fighting desperately for its own—for Tad.

The next couple of weeks were pretty much hell all around. For me it was a species of continual nightmare. What it was for Tad only Tad could know—although I felt that poor Lou, with her own back against the wall, could imagine something about that from her own feelings. For Lou stayed on the scene still. It was as if she kept away as long as she could and then just had to come. She showed up every two or three nights; and Tad kept delaying sending her packing.

Meanwhile, if ever tragedy looked out of people's eyes, it looked out of theirs, every now and then, when their glances met—if they thought I wasn't watching. They were tearing each other to pieces—and knew it—and couldn't stop themselves. The worst of it was that there was so little I could do to help Tad stop himself. Even though you think your friend is going to throw away his whole life on some woman the very next minute, there's never much that an outsider can do in these cases. The only thing I could rely on was the picture.

There's no use cataloguing the progress of the agony in detail. Here's the typical layout: Lou spends the evening with us. Tad sees her into a taxi about eleven o'clock—comes back into the room—walks around like a caged animal until I start cursing him—slips into his chair by the fire—tries to read, in a vain attempt to keep his eyes off the picture up there on the mantel—until I take pity on him and go to my bedroom, where I eavesdroppingly leave my door open and watch him from bed.

Then the regular thing happens. As Tad sits gazing at the picture, the struggle is on. In him, on him, all over his perturbed soul, this ghostly fight between the spirits of two women goes on-away down in the heart of him. The picture fights it out with Lou. Some nights I think that the picture wins; other nights it seems to be Lou that triumphs—as on the night when I saw him kiss her scarfpin. But every night, as the minutes pass, Tad's face grows whiter, more and more set; until at last, worn out, he gets up and puts out the light, blotting his haggard face from sight. And with a prayer to the picture to keep fighting the good fight, I get to my troubled sleep, to dream of Tad paying his score. He was paying, all right, paying hardeven unto the losing of considerable weight and most of his old self in the

Then suddenly the whole thing came to a finish. Glooming into the room about seven o'clock one night—toward the end of April—with the idea of getting Tad to go out and get a quiet dinner with me somewhere, I saw something that startled me. Tad, whom I had been watching go through hell and whose eyes had been reflecting that region's tempestuous fires for the last two months—was sitting strumming on his old guitar, carelessly trolling a merry little catch. He had the look on his face of one whose soul is at peace.

It was a sight to give one pause. In fact it paused me so much that I could only stand there staring at him in openmouthed dumbness, until he saw me, and, after a moment's scrutiny, gave me a little laugh. I gave a nervous laugh back at him, and, as I looked at him, I knew that the thing was settled at

last.

Then I growled something about "Come out and have a regular live dinner with me to-night."

But Tad only said: "Sorry. Got a date." And as he spoke, his eyes wandered to the picture with a queer little smile.

I flattered myself that I knew the date. And it certainly made me feel pretty joyful. Incidentally this was the nearest he had come to mentioning the angel of the picture since the first night I had found him gazing at it. Before I could get up enough nerve to question him more closely, Tad spoke himself.

"I'm not such a blind fool," he said, still with that queer little smile, "as not to have seen that I've given you a bunch of worry, old top. I guess several of us have had a pretty bad session. But the time for your worrying has gone past, Tommy. It's all settled. I was married this afternoon."

I could just follow him, dumfounded, as he got up, and, taking the picture from the mantel, handed it to me.

"To her," he added quietly.

I stood there, opening and shutting my mouth without getting any noise out of it, though several and various questions were rioting in my head. Why had Tad not got married in a civilized way—or at least told me he was going to go through on the express? How could such a girl as she of the picture marry so precipitously? As far as that went, who the deuce was she, anyway? But all that I could say was:

"I'm crazy to meet her, me boy!"
"She'll be here any minute," said

Tad

As I stood there, staring at the photograph in my hand, an inconsistent enough thing happened. I suddenly began to feel an astonishing sympathy for the defeated Lou—just such sympathy as I had felt when I had watched her departing down Madison Avenue with Tad on that first snow-driven February night, a vague feeling of regret for the throwing away of the makings of a fine woman. However, just as I began feeling sorry for Lou when I ought to have been shouting with joy for the victory of the picture, a knock came at the door.

"That's-that's Mrs. Tad now," I

heard Tad say.

As he went to let her in, I started to replace the picture on the mantel, before the original of it should discover me exhibiting an embarrassing curiosity about her. But as I fumbled with it, the door opened and I heard Tad saving:

"My wife, Tommy!"

Turning around, I saw Tad smiling his queer, small smile. By his side stood Lou Summers.

How long she and I stood looking at each other I do not know. But gradually I grasped what—or, rather, whom—I was looking at. I have said that this was a story of the "triangle" variety, involving the appearance of the "other" woman. Well, this was when I met her. As Lou stood before me with her hand outstretched, begging me without words to try to understand—and forgive—something suddenly made

me look back at the picture up there on the mantel. And then, as I looked back at Lou, I saw—saw the "other" woman looking at me out of Lou's own eyes. The eyes of that girl of barely twenty were the eyes of the tired woman of thirty leaning on Tad's arm. As she met my stare, Lou gave me an appealing little nod and said:

"Yes-that's a picture of me-twelve

years ago."

After all, it was natural enough that I should never have identified her with the girl of the picture. The face of the pure young maid of that photograph was one thing; that of the tired woman of thirty—after twelve years of the game Lou Summers had been playing—was quite another. That is, until the moment when I saw the soul of the girl she had been—of the woman she ought to have been—looking yearningly out of her eves at me.

Later that evening, when Tad returned from seeing his wife home, he came straight over to me as I sat trying to reconcile myself to the thing. Laying his hand on my shoulder, he pointed

up to the picture.

"Tommy," he said quietly, "somewhere in Lou still lives the soul of—of the girl in that photograph. It hasn't been quite killed. I know it hasn't, because—well, because it happened to—to make me fall in love with it. I'm going to nurse it back to health, Tommy—and give it back to Lou." Then he added softly, with his odd little smile: "That's why I married her. You see, it's—it was the only way left, after all, to win the girl I want for my wife."

And there the matter rests. They have been living away up in Manitoba for years now—possibly atways will—they and their children. As to whether, having got what they wanted, they are, as Thackeray wondered of some of his people, happy, I cannot say. With all

my heart I hope so.

I merely submit that I have seen a human soul—Lou Summers' being the one in question—saved from hell by a photograph; assuming, as I say, that the phrase may be applied to the salvation of a human being from lifelong degradation while on earth. Which, as Thackeray might further have said, is some hell, whatever your theology.



#### VANISHED

LOVE'S left us—yet we never saw him go.

We were besotted with contentment, so

We quite forgot that Love is born with wings,

And to our daily routine, dull and slow,

We bound this lord of lords and king of kings;

Then turned our thoughts to more material things,

Thinking we had Love fettered fast. When, lo,

We looked, and found him gone! Too late we know

Love will not stay with those who bind his wings.

Too late we know the glory that's bereft us,

He broke his bonds—we never saw him go.

Love's left us!

BERTON BRALEY.





HIS is a true story. I have read only too many ghost stories and mystery stories that began with that sentence, but were palpably un-

authentic nevertheless, and did not give you a single thrill even if you were alone in the house with them at midnight. But this one is true.

My Aunt Matilda Johnson was rich and eccentric.

I was her namesake and favorite niece, but I had no expectations. I had forfeited them.

I made photographs of pretty ladies for my living; pretty ladies only. Any lady is pretty if you eliminate judiciously chosen portions of her features, and a photograph is twice as flattering as brushwork, because the sitter has a complacent feeling that the camera cannot lie. Though I made three times the money I should at teaching, the profession my Aunt Matilda advocated for me, I worked three times as hard. I had a studio on a cross street just off the avenue, because I couldn't afford an unprosperous address, and I lived in my studio because I couldn't afford to pay two rents.

But my Aunt Matilda would have it that I had preferred an idle, bohemian life to a more industrious career, and she never forgave me. She continued to send me a five-dollar gold piece at Christmas—five dollars is the most awkward of sums to receive, too big to waste and too small to hoard—but beyond that she held no communication with me. I was, therefore, considerably surprised when, two months after her death, her lawyers forwarded me the following letter, peremptory and brief, like all letters from my aunt:

By my direction, a valued possession of mine is on the way to you.

MATILDA JOHNSON.

I was having a busy day. In view of all the sleepless nights her legacy was to cause me, I am glad to say that, after the first shock of surprise, I did not think of my aunt's letter again till dinner time, when I showed it to the Big Man, the Little Man, the Genius, and the Child.

These four boys had cultivated my acquaintance at first because I made good tea and let them talk about themselves. I had cultivated theirs because they took care of me in crowds, protected me in noisy little restaurants, and commanded the respect of the waiters in big ones. But this friendship of convenience soon deepened into a closer bond. We believed in one another and lent money to one another and took care of one another as only little groups of lonely people in big cities know how to do. We were a crowd. And not one of the four would have dreamed of

making love to another girl without telling me, and not one would have dreamed of making love to me,

The Big Man was a lawyer, at the bottom of his profession, with his face firmly set toward the top. He was the best-looking man I knew, but I had never told him so. For one reason or another, or for no reason at all, we were continually quarreling. The Little Man was a successful illustrator, and inclined to be proud of it, too proud, and it was my chief duty to him to prevent it. My duty to the Genius was to keep him persuaded that he was a genius. Everybody knows it now, but even the Genius and I were often tempted to doubt it. in the days when he was getting fired from all the New York dailies in turn, and writing his masterpiece in a hall room in an East Side lodging house. The Child looked like a genius, too, or a minor poet, at the least, but he was a bank clerk. He was engaged to a smalltown girl, and it was my duty to him to listen to letters from Cynthia.

The Child was of opinion that my Aunt Matilda's valued possession would prove to be some relic of her first love -a casket of letters or a miniature; the Little Man, that my sardonic old aunt had bequeathed me an empty purse, or a tomato pincushion, or a large, oldfashioned watch that would not keep time. The Genius argued that a valued possession must have money value. It might be some family jewel that you could sell or pawn. The Big Man had no suggestion to offer, and I was glad. The other three seemed to me to be talking lightly of serious subjects, though, of course, I had no idea then how serious, for them and for me.

I let the Big Man take me home. The boys used to contest the privilege. They might let me pay my own way like a man, but they never quite forgot that I was a girl. We walked all the way home from the Tenth Street table d'hôte where we five always dined together on

Fridays, and we were not involved in one dispute on the way. This was so unprecedented that I asked him to come in. The Big Man and I often speculate about the difference it might have made in both our lives if he had; if he had been present when I received my

legacy.

I was alone. It came bumping up my stairs about ten, when the lights in the hall were low, and the delivery man couldn't see his way clearly, and expressed himself unpleasantly all the way up on that account. The bumping and grumbling sounded horribly sinister, but the shrouded bulk he slammed down in the middle of my room looked distinctly inviting. I attacked the burlap with my embroidery scissors eagerly. There were so many things in the world I wanted, from a hand sewing machine to a set of Schopenhauer; perhaps my elaborately infolded gift was one of them. Or, better still, it might be the kind of surprise a child finds in a Christmas stocking, something I had wanted for months without realizing I wanted it. It might be anything. I could not bear to abandon all these charming possibilities and open it. My heart beat rather faster than usual, and my hands actually trembled as I pulled away the burlap and looked.

I gave one look, and, I am not ashamed to own it, collapsed on the bearskin hearthrug I took all my troubles to, with angry tears in my eyes. My aunt's mysterious gift was only a chair.

A chair of impressive bulk and ample proportions, of some dark wood that looked rare and ancient to me, though I am not a connoisseur. The massive carved arms were scarred and battered, and the cushion was worn and discolored. A piece of paper was pinned to it. The paper was yellow, the ink faded, but there was unfading energy in every line of my aunt's curious, cramped handwriting:

You have consistently disregarded my wishes and disappointed my hopes. I therefore assume that any personal reminder of myself would be unwelcome to you. This heirloom is a reminder of the traditions of your race. Far as you have already departed from them, may the sight of it serve to restrain you when you are tempted to go too far.

This is known as "the courting chair." It was built for your ancestress, Lady Matilda Arbuthnot, the beauty, who is said to have received fifty-seven formal offers of marriage and a considerably larger number of avowals of love. From her time to the present, the chair has been handed down from one lady of your house to another, and with it this secret: It is haunted by the ghosts of Lady Matilda's lovers, who exert so potent an influence that any gentleman seated in the chair and left alone with a young woman will offer marriage to her.

General Washington was rejected by Matilda Arbuthnot Warren, the toast of Virginia, in this chair. Your late uncle was sitting in it for the first time when he proposed for my hand. Naturally I consider these and the many well-authenticated similar occurrences as pure coincidence, and place no faith in the supernatural powers of the chair. I relate its history only to impress upon you the antiquity of the relic I am intrusting to you. Matilda Johnson.

Now, I had been truly fond of my Aunt Matilda. When her clear brown eves looked at me and through me. I was disconcerted, like everybody else, but I used to like the sensation. I never toadied to her, I was never afraid of her, and all her vagaries never drove away my affection for her. A personal reminder of herself would not have been unwelcome to me, decidedly not. I longed for one. A wave of hurt and homesickness swept over me. I rang for the janitress, to ask her to get the reminder of the traditions of my race out of my sight. But "Hold fast what I give you, and catch what you can" has always been my recipe for success in New York, as I presently remembered, and I decided to keep the heirloom. So I gave the janitress the burlap and excelsior, brushed up the floor, and finished my cry in the courting chair.

My new chair did not hang about on the outskirts of the room, wedged into dark corners or obstructing needed floor space, after the manner of new furniture generally in that period of probation when the old things appear to resent its intrusion and decline to make room for it. Before my breakfast coffee was through percolating next day, it was evident that there was only one place in the room for the chair. It had settled there inevitably, as a pretty woman takes the center of the stage. I moved the couch a little to the left and the piano a little to the right. I exchanged my three feet of gas tubing for four, on purpose to put my roseshaded droplight on the teakwood stand beside the chair. At the time I attached no significance to this, and felt no awe of my new possession. But I did feel a growing reluctance to reveal the history of the chair. I seemed to be tonguetied on the subject. When the Child rang up to inquire about my legacy, I did not mention Lady Matilda Arbuthnot to him, though one ghost would have delighted his romantic soul, to say nothing of fifty-seven. At the end of a week, the Arbuthnot secret was still safe with me, but I meant to tell the boys all about it on Friday.

That Friday night nobody met me at Gatti's but the Little Man. The Era had sent him a serial to illustrate, and he read me extracts from it while his soup got cold. He was wearing a cerise tie, and I had to explain to him once more why we do not allow him to appear in that color. It was raining, and he burned a hole in my one silk umbrella with a cigarette ash. The Little Man and I, trailing wearily up my three flights of stairs, were a bedraggled and

uncongenial pair.

We were discussing possible models for his *Era* work. When he is planning new work, you generally find yourself discussing it with him, no matter where you start the conversation.

"A petite brunette," said the Little Man, as I lighted the candles. "None of your unwieldy big women. A big woman is an offense against the economy of the universe. What is the use of her extra three inches or so, to herself or any one else, I ask you? Black hair, the color of night—and dreams."

My hair is mouse brown, and my height is five feet seven. I got him a bronze ash try with deliberate intent.

He prefers china.

"Ah, the new chair!" said the Little Man, perceiving it. "It looks somewhat the worse for wear. Some of your ancestors try to chop it up for kindling? Good idea! Wood is going up."

He was looking so small and dapper and supercilious that just then I disliked the Little Man, as we dislike only our best friends in moments of irritation.

"If you will select the one uncomfortable chair in the room——" I said.

"Uncomfortable? At least it's not unsafe. It's not a gimcrack parlor ornament. It's solid and sound." A chair of mine once folded its forelegs and collapsed beneath him at a formal tea, and he does not allow me to forget the circumstance. "It's a man's chair."

Here was my opening, my chance to tell him the Arbuthnot secret, which had been too long untold, and was beginning to weigh upon me.

"Stop grouching," I began. "I've got

something to say to you."

The Little Man took possession of my softest couch cushion, adjusted it to his liking, and seated himself in the courting chair. He looked very comfortable there. He had taken out his pipe, but he did not light it. He settled back in the chair and closed his eyes. He did not ask what I had to say. He did not seem to care. His sleek, blond head was becomingly outlined against my rose-colored cushion. I sat curled up on the couch and looked at him. Presently he opened his eyes and looked at

me. The Little Man has great, beautiful, brown-velvet eyes. He looked at me as if he had never seen me before.

"Matilda," he said—the four always call me Johnny—"Matilda—dear." He got my hand into his. The boy had held my hand through a whole act of "Tristan und Isolde," only the week before, but not quite the same way. Queer little thrills ran through my arm. "Dear," said the Little Man, "I want you to marry me."

No girl of our grandmothers' day, with ardent declarations and impassioned protestations hers as a matter of course, could possibly want these luxuries as much as we do in the present generation, when they are rare, and the art of love-making is out of fashion, and we are loved more than we are made love to. I had never hoped to hear, except on the stage, anything like the Little Man's burst of eloquence. I did not check it.

I was the only woman he had ever loved, I was a dream come true, I was admired for every charm I possess, and for just the charms I conspicuously lack, and, therefore, long to be credited with, for five magic minutes. Then I tried to shake off the spell, but it lingered. I felt as if I were taking part in an impromptu costume charade. I could not reject the boy in plain English.

"You have done me the greatest honor a man can do a woman"—that is what I said, and I liked the sound of it—"but

what you ask is impossible."

He bent gracefully over my hand and kissed it. Then he got up. As he stood looking down at me, a bewildered expression swept over his face. It grew and grew. I felt very sorry for him.

"This hurts me, too," I said. "Per-

haps you had better go."

I rather expected he would fall on his knees, but he did not. He still looked puzzled and a shade sulky.

"Of course I'll go, Johnny," he said,

"if you want me to. I know you've got some developing to do." And he went.

There had been one boy at home who would have proposed to me if I had let him, and there had been more than one man who might have proposed if I had managed him right, but this was my first authentic proposal of marriage. I was only twenty-six, which is not so sophisticated an age as it then appeared to me, and my first proposal upset me. For a delightful fifteen minutes I put my cheek against the rose-colored cushion, which smelled of stale tobacco smoke, and permitted myself to be upset.

Then I put out the candles, turned on every top light in the chandelier, and inspected myself in the glass impartially. My winter theory of dress is simple. I get the most impressive velvet gown I can afford, wear it on all occasions until it wears out, and then get another. My green velvet was just the color of my eyes, and becoming enough, but it was in the last week of its service, and showed it. My hair, which is not the color of night or dreams, was disgracefully tumbled. By the most conservative measurement, I had at least three superfluous inches of height which were no good to myself or any one else, from the Little Man's point of view. If I was any man's dream come true. I was not the Little Man's.

I got out my Aunt Matilda's letter and read it, assured myself with unnecessary emphasis that ghosts do not flourish within sight of Fifth Avenue

-and read the letter again.

Next day, the Little Man called me up early and informed me that he was going West in search of local color for the *Era* pictures, and was leaving by a morning train. There was not a trace of sentiment in his voice to indicate that he had ever entertained the slightest intention of marrying me. He sounded particularly cheerful and businesslike. He was always less artist than business

man. He was not in the habit of losing his head. But in his sober senses he was evidently not in love with me.

I was not a superstitious young woman, and I was a hard-working one. Some of my sitters were unusually hard to please-successful débutantes, with an exaggerated idea of their attractions, and less successful débutantes, who did not wish their portraits to show the reasons why they were not popular. Besides, the Big Man, who lived with him, was lonely without the Little Man, and the rest of us organized diversions for him. It was my first free evening for weeks, I was putting up new sash custains, and I had forgotten I owned a haunted chair, when the Genius came to tell me he had lost his job.

I had on an apron; not a beribboned trifle, but the kind I wash dishes in—pink-and-white-checked gingham, with a turnover collar and long sleeves. I was standing on a table, making a hole in the window frame with a large screw and a small tack hammer, and I would not have come down till that hole was made for any one in New York but the

Genius,

Just as the Little Man is at his best when passing tea to elderly ladies, and I am at my best in my old-rose charmeuse, so the Genius is his most ingratiating self when he is in hard luck. His close-cropped brown head looks more like a schoolboy's than ever, his mouth droops, his hazel eyes cease to twinkle, and you would say that he had never laughed hard in his life, and would give everything you own to make him laugh.

That night he had taken a long walk instead of dinner, and it was not an adequate substitute. I gave him the grape-fruit I had designed for my breakfast, some cold meat, and all the tea cakes I had left, and made him a jam omelet and a cup of coffee. I told him that his work combined the best points of Joseph Conrad's and Guy de Maupas-

sant's, and that Lane & Lee were looking for a new reader, and would pay him fifteen dollars a week.

Then the Genius stopped talking darkly of the East River, mentioned his intention of taking a bachelor apartment on Riverside when the royalties from his first book came in, and consented to hang my curtains. That would divert his mind, if it disturbed mine.

He had put up one rod with mathematical accuracy and commendable firmness, half an inch too high. He still stood in the chair, contemplating his work, I supposed, and awaiting my approval. He awaited it in silence, and looked eagerly at me. He looked and looked. I began to find the silence disconcerting.

"That's beautiful!" I said.

"Beautiful?" said the Genius. "You are beautiful. Dear, the rows of cups on the kitchenette shelves behind you have all the homely charm of a Dutch interior, and you are the rosy heart of the picture, with the long, straight lines of that apron thing showing off the strong, supple figure of you, and your mother smile, and your shy, unwon girl's eyes. You are more beautiful than I can tell you. Why have I never told you before how beautiful you are ?"

Why? I knew why, and I knew the look in his hazel eyes too well, though I had never seen it there before. The Genius was standing in the most substantial chair in the room, the courting chair.

"Oh, I didn't think it would work unless you were sitting in it. Do stop! Do get down!" I said wildly, but it was too late. I don't think he heard me,

"Johnny, I need you. Why have I never seen it before?" he said. "That's why I'm down to my last hundred dollars. That's why I can't get punch enough into my stuff to land it anywhere. That's why I have lived to be

twenty-seven years old—twenty-seven!
—and not made a name for myself. I
need some one to work for, some one to
live for. I need you. Johnny, you've
got to marry me."

When the Genius was a real little boy instead of a grown-up one, I am sure he had the measles and mumps and whooping cough harder than the other little boys, for he suffers from the ordinary discomforts of life as the rest of us do not. He can be hungrier and thirstier and wearier than an ordinary mortal—and happier. His face was happier than I had ever seen it, now—and hungrier. I could hardly answer him, I was so jealous of the girl he would find some day to work for and live for and feel for as he now thought he felt for me.

"I can't, dear. We mustn't talk any more about it," I said.

"Yes, we must!" There was a determined ring in his voice, and his eyes commanded me. There was no denying him. I think it was then I made up my mind irretrievably that he would be a great man some day.

"No," I whispered, but for a minute I didn't mean it, and he saw that I didn't. He jumped down from the chair with a little conquering laugh, and came to me.

"It's not fair—" he began triumphantly. Then he paused. His eager look searched my face as he stood close to me, searched, and at length abruptly ceased to search. Suddenly his face was not transfigured any longer, but white and tired. The shadows showed plainer under the eyes, and the fretted lines round the mouth.

"It's not fair," he said lifelessly, "to wear you out like this, Johnny. Don't mind what I've said. I hardly know what it was. I'm not just myself tonight. It's late, and I'm going, dear Thank you. Good night!"

He came to tea a few days later, Lane & Lee had availed themselves of his services—at twelve dollars a week instead of fifteen, but he felt rich enough to bring me several pounds of Schuyler's on the strength of it. He received my congratulations airily, and spoke of the Riverside apartment as a thing of the near future, but did not invite me to occupy it with him, or betray by word or look any recollection of our last conversation. And I was not surprised, for by this time I was forced to admit that there was something wrong with that chair.

It was not my two proposals of marriage that convinced me. They were corroborative evidence, that was all. They were queer occurrences, but a perfectly healthy-minded girl could have explained them without dragging in the supernatural. By this time I was not healthy-minded. I had never had the slightest faith in ghosts, but I now had a haunted chair in my studio, or a chair that a number of women, who may have been wiser than I, and were certainly prettier, had pronounced to be haunted. I piled the couch cushions in it when I went to bed every night.

It was a demoralizing belief, though I tried not to dwell upon it except when I was safe in bed, and nobody could know how silly I was. My universe was upset. I couldn't be sure that black was black and white was white any longer. I watched the gasman anxiously when he climbed up in the fatal chair to inspect my meter, which was located above my top closet shelf. A declaration of love from him would have distressed, but not surprised, me. I had lost my sense of perspective entirely.

The Big Man was on the verge of a junior partnership, was being thoroughly tried out, and sent anywhere from California to Cuba at twenty-four hours' notice in the course of the process. I could not understand why I missed him so much during these absences; it was, perhaps, part of my generally disturbed state of mind. The

Little Man had come home without a sketch or a canvas to show for his trip, but with plausible explanations of the fact. The Little Man's society, like that of the Genius, was not an unmixed pleasure to me now. Their blissful unconsciousness that anything out of the common had passed between us was one of the hardest things I had to bear. I avoided tête-à-têtes with them.

I began to spend more of my time with the Child than usual, so much more that a less ingenuous nature than his would have wondered at the change. I had to cultivate a taste for simple pleasures, because he was saving part of his twenty a week for Cynthia. We took walks, instead of bus rides, where the fare counts up so: we got a glass of milk and a chicken sandwich at Kidd's after the theater; and bought seats in the second balcony instead of the first. I went to St. Ursula's with him on Sunday mornings, He entertained doubts as to whether there was a future life, but Cynthia was a High Church Episcopalian.

I, who had made fun of him and educated him and loved him like a little brother, grew to look up to him, for I came to know what gentle and knightly ideals he cherished, and how clean he was in heart and how sturdy in body as he swung along beside me untiringly. Sometimes I would look at her smiling picture in the back of his dollar watch, and wonder if Cynthia, or any girl, could be worthy of the Child.

The last Saturday in February it rained. We had planned a walk on the Palisades and dinner at a little restaurant we had discovered together. I gave him a substantial lunch and a chair by my open fire afterward, and the Child seemed well content with the change of plan. The Little Man can turn out the best omelet I know of outside France, and the Genius handles a spoon with the born cook's turn of the wrist, but the Child eats much more

at a sitting than either of them, and it is the Child I like best to cook for. He had emptied my chafing dish twice that day, but he attacked a box of candy after that with apparently undiminished appetite. When there was nothing left in the box but chocolate nuts and pastel-colored bonbons, he hunched himself luxuriously back in his chair, and grinned at me.

"This is all right," he observed com-

prehensively.

"What do you want to do now, son?" I asked. "Go to moving pictures, or

talk about Cynthia?"

Through the brooding calm that follows a more than adequate meal, there penetrated slowly the disturbing thought that he was a long time deciding what to do, that he had been a long time without speaking. I watched him anxiously. He sat with his eyes on the fire. I would have said he saw pictures in it, if you could see pictures in a prosaic New York grate fire of hard coal. There was a new note in his nice, well-bred voice when he spoke at last.

"No, I don't want to talk about Cynthia. I'm tired of it. I want to talk about you." His blue eyes were very bright, and he sat up very straight in his chair—the courting chair.

"You make a fellow so comfortable. You're so easy to talk to, and such a splendid cook. You've got such a sweet face. And nobody ever understood me

but you."

The warning in that last phrase is unmistakable to any woman. I knew what it meant. The Child—the innocent, victimized Child—was trying to make love to me

"Last week, when we went over that thirty-five-dollar flat on a Hundred and Sixty-first Street, and you showed me where Cynthia and I could put the piano, and what kind of curtains we could get, it wasn't Cynthia I saw playing that piano; it was you, Johnny. Cyn-

thia'd be glad enough to get rid of me. She only writes to me once a week, and never more than four pages. She's just been to the Psi Kappa ball, and had to split every dance. She's tired of me. And she's miles and miles away, and I'm here and you're here. Oh, Johnny, I wish——"

But here I rallied from my paralyzed amazement, and cut him short. "You Child!" I said. "You great, ridiculous Child! Yes, I love you, I love you dearly. We all do. But I don't want to see you again till next Friday. I want you to go home now and write to

Cynthia."

After the Little Man's proposal, I had lain awake half the night; after the Genius', I had cried my eyes out; but that day, when the Child, haughtily declining the loan of my umbrella, tramped away through the rain, I didn't watch him out of sight. I went straight down to my dark room in the basement, and spent a profitable, even a happy, afternoon.

I have read that the occupants of haunted castles get used to their ghosts, and remark quite calmly: "There's the bloody child on the tennis lawn," or, "Great-aunt Araminta is making a lot of noise to-night." Well, I was used to the courting chair. It had lost me my three best friends. It had done its worst, and I had no more to fear from it. I did not much care what it did next, but I was faintly curious to see.

Unlike my other two suitors, the Child had managed to retain some recollection of his outburst, for he apologized to me, explaining lucidly that he must have been mad. After that we avoided each other by common consent. The Little Man was working overtime on the last of the *Era* pictures, and the Genius was giving more than their money's worth to Lane & Lee. Moreover, the cooking at Gatti's had ceased to attract me. I was tired of tasting garlic and smelling it at the same time.

I arranged to take all my meals at a Madison Avenue boarding house, where I had dined occasionally. I spent my Sundays with a distant cousin in Flushing, and my Saturday afternoons at a spring course of lectures on current events.

Through the spring months-those crowded months before the summer holidays, which are the longest months in the year, whatever the calendar says -I worked on my nerve, firmly convinced that I was not tired, and did not miss the boys. There was not a line worth laughing at or crying at in the plays I attended alone, in my new spring suit. I had received no reliable verdict upon my spring hat. Life did not look gay; but life was not gay, it was a serious matter. Intimate friendships were a hindrance to a business woman. I was teaching myself not to depend upon the boys.

One night when I had been two weeks without seeing them or hearing from them, as I sat contemplating the roses on my hat with hostility, and thinking of the lukewarm soup which the correct Madison Avenue maid would presently serve me, I heard a quick step coming up my stairs, and an ancient popular tune whistled badly off key. The Big

Man had come home.

He had come straight from the train to me. He dropped a worn, but stunning, leather bag in the corner, hung his ulster on the brass hooks that had been put up expressly for him, sat down in the nearest chair—I didn't notice then which chair it happened to be—and beamed at me. I realized all over again, as I always have to do when I have been separated from him, how broad his shoulders are.

"How are we?" he said. "The pretty ladies and—the prettiest lady?" A compliment from the Big Man! That was odd, but his next words drove it out of my mind. "Johnny, I win, I win! Wayne wired me. I've had to know it twelve

hours without telling you, but I wouldn't telegraph. I wanted to tell you myself. The Anderson case settled it. I've made good. I'll have my name on the door. I'll have a fair salary, and I'll get a bigger one out of them soon. Are you happy? Well, you're going to be happy. Darling, how tired you look!"

I was tired. I wanted with all my heart to let him go on talking. The very sound of his voice was resting me. I do not know how it was I found courage to stop him, but I did find it. I clutched at his shoulders. There was hysteria in my voice. I could hear it myself.

"Get up!" I cried. "Get out of that

awful chair!"

"Johnny! You poor little girl!"

"Don't touch me! Sit therethere!"

I twisted my hands out of his, and pushed him frantically toward the couch. He submitted, quite as if he were humoring an excited child. The danger was over. The strength went out of my knees, out of my whole body, and I sank down where I was, at the end of the couch, in the courting chair. I leaned my head against the carved back, and closed my eyes.

"It's all right now," I breathed.
"What do you mean, darling?"

I felt a warm hand close over mine, and did not shake it off. My brain was busy with a new and startling problem. Why was hot color flooding my cheeks and forehead? Why was my heart fluttering? Why did I feel that I should have died of shame if the Big Man had proposed to me in the courting chair? Why did I feel all this for the Big Man's sake, if not for the dearer three? Why for the Big Man?

I opened my eyes and looked at him. I looked as if I had never seen him before, and, as I looked, I made the strangest discovery, so strange that I could not keep silent, I had to share it.

"I love you." It was I who said it, not he. "I love you, and I am going to

marry you."

This was my last thought as the Big Man's arms closed around me. I had kept him from proposing to me, but I had proposed to him. Now, indeed, the courting chair had done its worst for me.

"You don't believe that stuff?" said the Big Man. "Baby!" It was somewhat later, and the Big Man and I, both occupying it, had returned to connected speech, and were discussing the courting chair.

I was ashamed to answer, but he did not laugh at me. His face grew wiser and sweeter than I had yet seen it, as he gave his gravest consideration to my difficulties, just because they were

mine.

"Couldn't you see all those boys were more or less in love with you, and bound to find it out sooner or later?" he said. "Platonic friendship is a complicated game, and man is a simple brute, you know. Why, the Little Man talks about you in his sleep. The Genius has an enlarged snapshot of you-it looks like the Mona Lisa in her callow youth, but it's meant for you-framed on his dresser, and keeps a single rose before The Child has walked my floor till long past midnight repeatedly, going on about the follies of youth, and the great passion of a man's life, which wipes them out. He didn't mention your name, and he didn't need to. We'll have Cynthia up to visit us, and give her another chance at him. We'll make everybody else as happy as we are—"

"But why did they both forget all about it the minute they got out of the chair?"

"They didn't. The Little Man saw it was no good, and dropped the subject. No girl gets the chance to turn him down twice. He's too conceited. The Genius lost his head over you, and then pulled up. He's too decent to keep you tied up, and too poor to marry. But he's crazy about you."

"You make it sound very simple," I

said politely.

The unreasoning conviction that had fastened upon me was not, however, to be dislodged by mere reasoning. But on the morning mail I received this letter from my aunt's lawyers:

Dear Madam: We regret to inform you that, owing to a misunderstanding on the part of your late aunt's housekeeper, it was not the chair designated in codicil ten of her will that we expressed to you, but one belonging to her famous Gothic dining-room suite. We discovered this mistake in the course of the auction sale of her household effects. We are making every effort to locate your chair.

But they never found it. We purchased the Gothic dining chair from my aunt's estate at a rather exorbitant figure. Battered antiques are permitted only in obscure corners of our immaculate Long Island home, so our extravagant purchase is relegated to the nursery, where the latest and chubbiest Matilda Arbuthnot plays house in it. It is, however, still known to her parents as the courting chair.





The plays, exclusive of musical comedy, that are reviewed in this department are those bulletined by the New York Center of the Drama League.

LAYS long and carefully prepared, extravagantly advertised, put on with a blare of trumpets, and carried off to the storehouse in a few days;

plays postponed; plays rushed on without rehearsal to fill an unexpected vacancy; plays moving from theater to theater in a vain attempt to find an audience and to pay rent; and among them all no play that is worth while that is the history of the month in the New York playhouses.

There have, no doubt, been months in other years as dramatically barren, but a month more hopeless it would be impossible to imagine. It leaves us not only nothing to look back upon, but nothing to look forward to, in return for enormous expenditures of time, hope, and energy, and of enough money to satisfy the hunger of all Belgium.

"Of course, it is the fault of the war; people will not spend their money for amusements this year," is the general way of accounting for the condition. But is this true? How far is it true?

People are paying speculators four dollars a seat to watch the antics of the "super-clown," Fred Stone, in "Chin Chin"; they are standing three deep, as they do on Caruso nights at the Metropolitan, to hear Irving Berlin's clever ragging" of "Rigoletto," see the Vernon Castles dance, and listen to Frank Tinney's age-old humor in "Watch Your Step." And when there is no more room at the New Amsterdam, they go across to the Lyric and pay full price to see "The Only Girl," one of the worst of Victor Herbert's musical comedies, where the general level of the production is suggested by the lines of one of the songs, which run something like this:

Real acting is all right, but, on the quiet, Why should we try it, When we know it's personality that pays?

If there are audiences and money for these "shows" in time of war, why not for others? The answer cannot be that these entertainments succeed because they appeal to the frivolous, to whom even the war is not real. Or else how account for the fact that the seats for the Boston Symphony concerts are sold out for the season, and that the Philharmonic subscription list is larger than

it was last year?
The Boston Symphony Orchestra is a fine orchestra; Mr. Stransky is a fine

program maker; Fred Stone is a born clown; Irving Berlin is the "king of ragtime"; the Castles are good dancers; and Victor Herbert has given us so much good musical comedy that we trust him for more. We trust them all to do what they are advertised to do and to do it as well as it can be done. If we like antics, or ragtime, or Beethoven, we buy their tickets, and theirs only, in a year when we cannot afford to be fooled. That is the answer. Mentally and financially we are too worn to run our chances.

We go to the theater to be amused, entertained, or inspired, according to our tastes; but in any case we go to forget war and business and human suffering; and unless we are assured that the concert or the entertainment or the play is-according to our tastes-inspiring or interesting or rollicking enough to make us forget, we prefer to keep our money. We will pay two dollars a seat to see Elsie Ferguson in "The Outcast," but not to pass the time between a late dinner and a midnight supper at some play of doubtful charm and no punch, as we might have done a year ago.

The war has made us unwilling to take whatever we were given, as we have done at other times: so far it is to blame for the failure of the month's new offerings. But it is not responsible for the fact that we have been given nothing that was worth a moment's serious attention, nothing that possessed even the negative merit of constant mediocrity that often makes a popular success, nothing with enough artistic value to win a Drama League bulletin. war is not responsible for the fact that the only dramatic event of the month was the colossal failure of "The Garden of Paradise."

Who was responsible for that?

The play is a dramatization by Edward Sheldon, the successful author of "Salvation Nell" and "Romance," of

Hans Christian Andersen's immortal fairy tale, "The Little Mermaid.". The stage settings were designed by Joseph Urban, one of the leaders of the Viennese school of decoration. The actors were players of well-known skill. The music was specially written by Arthur The production was under the direct supervision of George Tyler, whose name has been associated with some of the most beautiful offerings of the American stage. Many weeks were given to rehearsal-for which the actors should have been paid, but, in accordance with present theatrical tradition, were not. No expense was spared; it was generally announced that fifty thousand dollars had been spent on the production before the curtain went up. And in spite of all this, the curtain went down after a few unhappy days; and all that was left of "The Garden of Paradise" was the memory of a production "which presented to the eye an imaginative beauty in line, color, and movement out of all proportion to the dramatic or literary value of the play."

The splendors of Joseph Urban's creation remained; but the beauty and poetry and drama in Hans Andersen's story, for the retelling of which all these splendors were created, the things that were the immortal soul of "The Little Mermaid," had turned into sea foam and vanished in "The Garden of Paradise."

There is not a story of all fairy lore more alive with drama than that of the little mermaid who sacrifices her home in the depths of the sea, the affection of her sisters, the hope of three hundred years of life, her glossy tail, and the most beautiful voice in the waters, on the chance of achieving an immortal soul through the love of a man. If the little mermaid wins the love of the handsome prince and he marries her, she is saved; but on the day that he marries another, she will be turned into sea foam and lost forever.

Such is her bargain with the old sea witch.

She is transformed into a beautiful but speechless maiden, who follows the prince with touching devotion, and who, even when he marries the princess of a neighboring kingdom, loves him too much to accept the chance her despairing sisters buy for her to save her life by killing the prince. Yet, in the end, her life is saved by the spirits of the air.

. There is more drama in that tale than there is in most five-act plays; so the failure of "The Garden of Paradise," let us admit at once, was not the fault of Hans Christian Andersen.

"But why did they ask a realist like Edward Sheldon to dramatize that story, with Josephine Peabody Marks and Percy Mackaye so near?" some people ask. "Why did Edward Sheldon, with his sense of dramatic values. put his strong hand to so delicate a work?" say others. "Why didn't somebody see that the lines were so heavyfooted that they had crushed the poetry out of a story whose poetry was its life?" "Why didn't Joseph Urban's sense of proportion teach him not to bury so simple a tale under all that glory of scenery and lighting?" "Why did Tyler make it so glaringly expensive and artificial that it left no room for imagination, which is the soul of the fairy tale?"

Why, indeed? Not because they wanted to make a failure of it, with fifty thousand dollars invested, but because they began with the mistaken notion that investing fifty thousand dollars would make it dramatic; because, with all their success and sincerity of purpose and undoubted devotion to the theater, there was not a man among them who was enough of an artist to appreciate the beauty and—what is more important in this case—the cash value of simplicity. The whole thing should have been played as children

would have played it, if its producers desired to appeal to the child spirit in the audience, as Mr. Hazeltine and Mr. Benrimo did in "Yellow Jacket," with their mountains and rivers and love boats made of a board and a couple of chairs.

At about the time when "The Garden of Paradise" was produced, another imaginative play, "The King of the Dark Chamber," by Rabindranath Tagore, the Hindu poet and philosopher, was presented to a New York audience. It was not given in a theater, but in the vestry rooms of old St. Marks in the Bouwerie, the church in whose neighborhood so much of the drama of early Dutch life in New York has been enacted. A small platform served as a stage; the scenery was primitive. The curtain was borrowed, and the lighting apparatus was rented. The acting, half professional and half amateur, was pretty bad. And yet there was more illusion, more poetry, a greater mystic quality, more real art, in that production, which cost but a few dollars, than there was in "The Garden of Paradise." The man who produced it, Mr. Benedict Papot, is an artist; in no other country but America would a man of such dramatic vision, intelligence, energy, and skill be permitted to remain out of the pale of the professional theater.

"The King of the Dark Chamber" was the first offering of a society called the "St. Marks' House of Play Foundation," organized to present the best modern plays by foreign authors. The second play of the series was Giuseppe Giacosa's "As the Leaves." Both of these plays fall within the range of interest of these columns because they are published by the Drama League—the Tagore play through Macmillan's; the Giacosa in the *Drama Quarterly*.

For some mysterious reason, these plays are counted among the dramas that are "too good for Broadway." That "The King of the Dark Chamber"

would not find a large audience in America seems a reasonable assumption, or at least would seem so, if "The Little Mermaid" had not been expected to find its field. That was not even, in its author's hands, a play, nor did its author have the advertising advantage of a Nobel prize. But "As the Leaves" is a social drama of the day; it deals with people and motives that we know; it is intensely human, intensely interesting, and absolutely convincing.

It is the story of a rich family, who

are not only delightful but good while money abounds, but whose will power has been atrophied, and who, when poverty forces purpose upon them, cannot say, "I will," or, "I will not." The play is sordid, but not gloomy, and its seriousness is relieved by the love story of the daughter, who is young enough to be saved by the power of affection and a fine example. The only difference between "As the Leaves" and a dozen plays that we have on Broadway this winter is that it is infinitely better.

# Ray

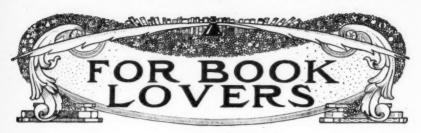
#### COMRADES

OH, Folly was conscienceless, weak, and bad, For she smiled and danced when the world was sad; And because she laughed at the world's despair, They said she was wicked and did not care— Yet wondered why God had made her so fair!

But none but the mother saw the tear She dropped as she stood at the dead child's bier, But the starving mother could understand When a purse was left in her trembling hand, And she murmured something in her prayers Of the visits of angels unawares.

And Folly, though shunned by the good and wise, Walked where the light of pleasure lies, And once, as she walked in the twilight gray, She paused at a chapel beside the way, Where a man of God had come to pray. But his lips were mute as he tried to chide The beautiful creature at his side, And it was not strange that the heart of the pastor Ventured to beat just a trifle faster As a trailing lock of her scented hair Swept his cheek as he bent in prayer.

But she only smiled and she did not care
For the wise one's scorn or the parson's prayer,
For the light of joy was in her eye.
Oh, Love had followed as she passed by!
WILL LISENBEE.





IME AND THOMAS WAR-ING," by Morley Roberts, published by G. P. Putnam's Sons, is one of a few, a very few, novels of the season that

can justly lay claim to real distinction. It is a remarkable story in many ways, and such defects as it suffers from are the result, paradoxical as it sounds, of one of its chief virtues. This, we think, is because Mr. Roberts has written in a manner, extremely attractive in itself, which is more or less unfamiliar to him and the difficulties of which he has not entirely mastered.

It is the story of a man whose life has been devoted to his work as a journalist, and who, because of his intense application, has won himself a position as an authority on foreign politics. To do this, he has dwarfed the essentially human side of his nature. A hard, unsympathetic husband and father, an intolerant and critical associate, an unthinking conformist, he finds himself facing a great emergency in his life with none of the props and comforts that cultivated emotion offers.

The story opens in the operating room of a "nursing home," where preparations are being made for a capital operation upon Thomas Waring. The defect in the story, of which we have spoken, appears at once in the excess of detail which is carried beyond reasonable limits. In spite of this, however, one cannot follow the description of the mental and spiritual experiences of Waring while he remains under the

influence of the anæsthetic without the most intense interest. For the suffering caused by his conception of the universe as a merciless, inexorable machine is almost appalling. The torments he endures are hellish to a sensitive mind, and no wonder can be felt that he emerges from them a changed man.

After a gradual convalescence, in the course of which he is gradually freed from these horrors, the story proceeds to show the effects of the changed conditions upon him and upon his relations with his family and friends. Because of the unusual position that he occupies, these changes make very dramatic and interesting material for a story, and Mr. Roberts has developed it all so as to make it appear a very natural and, therefore, convincing process.

It is, it must be confessed, rather a grim tale, especially in its conclusion, but its undoubted power and its vivid characterization combine to make it intensely absorbing.



A completely delightful and satisfying book is Arthur Sherburne Hardy's volume of stories, "Diane and Her Friends," published by Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

It is a book that makes one think again of "The Cardinal's Snuff Box," by Henry Harland, and "The Turquoise Cup," by Arthur Cosslet Smith.

While it is obviously a collection of

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short stories, each one distinct from the rest, the fact that the same characters are used throughout makes it seem like a connected whole.

They are all French, and the scene, except in a few instances, is in Freyr, a small town on the banks of the Meuse.

Delicacy, refinement, subtlety, humor, wit, pathos, are all blended in nearly perfect proportions in these stories. But these qualities of themselves would fail to complete a composition of such wonderful charm, if the essential element of warm human nature were lacking.

"Diane and Her Friends" is one of those rare books that make the business of literary criticism, for the critic, something more than a thankless task.



The middle-aged cynic will find much to comfort him—or her—in William Caine's book, "But She Meant Well," published by the John Lane Company, for he will be confirmed in the belief, which all cynics have, that hell is paved with good intentions. And it will make little difference in this particular case that the good intentions are those of a child.

Hannah is a trouble maker—there can be no doubt of that; and yet, withal, her small body is the very incarnation of the spirit of altruism. In all the long list of her achievements, it is impossible to recall one that has its origin in a single selfish motive.

For Hannah's ruling passion is to help others. And it is nothing more than the irony of fate that every one of her philanthropic enterprises miscarries and brings disaster where a benefaction was planned. Add to this the fact that she is a thoroughly healthy child, with an actively inventive mind, and it is not hard to understand how full is the life of the other members of the well-

ordered household of Reginald Sterne—the poet.

Mr. Caine's book is a delightful comedy, all the more so because he himself so obviously enjoys telling of Hannah's industries and understands her and sympathizes with her.



Fannie Heaslip Lea, who will be remembered pleasantly for her early short stories in AINSLEE's, has written a very charming little tale which she calls "Sicily Ann." It is published by Harper & Brothers.

Sicily Ann is a Virginia girl, a member of one of the proud but impoverished families of the Old Dominion. Whether such girls and such families are actual facts in Virginia, or whether they exist only in the imaginations of novelists, we don't know. Of one thing, however, we are sufficiently assured, namely, that they make excellent material for diverting stories.

It is likely that most people would label Sicily Ann as "ingénue," and let it go at that. But such a classification does not, for some reason, seem altogether satisfactory. She is a young person of too much energy and initiative and spontaneity to be lightly passed over with such a term. For all her innocence and appealing trustfulness, she is never at fault either as to the nature of her own likes and dislikes, or as to the quickest and most direct means of attaining them.

Her old-fashioned Virginia mother packs her off to Honolulu, presumably to visit her elder sister, the wife of an army officer, but really to break up her intimacy with "Jimmy," who is undesirable because he happens not to be a connection of an F. F. V.

The young person's adventures in Hawaii are the despair of her sophisticated sister, the more so because Jimmy proves himself to be a young man of enterprise appropriately matching that of Sicily Ann. And in spite of the presence and activity of the "most beautiful man in the United States army," the ending is a happy one.



"Night Watches" is the title of a new volume of short stories by W. W. Jacobs, published by Charles Scribner's Sons.

The chief figure in the book, though he does not appear in all the stories, is the night watchman of a wharf on the London water front; hence the title.

With the single exception of "The Three Sisters," which is a rather grisly tale, the stories are characteristically humorous.

The night watchman is another of the type that Mr. Jacobs has exploited in the person of Ginger Dick, Sam Small, and Peter Russet. He is an inveterate yarn spinner, pleased and self-complacent whenever he can get any one to listen to him, usually having nothing more important to tell than some of his own rather trivial experiences and observations. It is his naïveté—if one can use the word in connection with a long-shoreman—and his utter lack of humor

that make him so irresistibly funny, especially in the story called "The Double." He is a welcome addition to the glad company of Dick, Sam, and Peter.



#### Important New Books

"With the Allies," Richard Harding Davis; Charles Scribner's Sons.

"Sinister Street," Compton Mackenzie; D. Appleton & Co.

"Abroad at Home," Julian Street; Century Co.

"The Trawler," James B. Connolly; Charles Scribner's Sons,

"Incredible Adventures," Algernon Blackwood; Macmillan Co.

"The Strange Woman," Sidney McCall; Dodd, Mead & Co.

Dodd, Mead & Co.
"Shifting Sands," Mrs. Romilly Fedden;
Houghton Mifflin & Co.

"The Fakers," Samuel G. Blythe; George-H. Doran Co.

"The Enemy of Woman," Winifred Graham; Mitchell Kennerley.

"The Clarion," Samuel Hopkins Adams; Houghton Mifflin & Co.

"Sight to the Blind." Lucy Furman; Macmillan Co.

"The Listener and Other Stories," Algernon Blackwood; Donald C. Vaughan.

"First Cousin to a Dream," Cyril Harcourt; John Lane Co.

"Fatherland," Will Levington Comfort; George H. Doran Co.

"Stories Without Tears," Barry Pain; F. A. Stokes & Co.



## Talks With Ainslee's Readers

Agnes and Egerton Castle deal with a subject known to but few people—the guinea smuggling which, in the hands of daring and—what was rarer in those days—trustworthy men, proved so highly remunerative an enterprise in the early years of the last century.

The smuggling of gold out of England had begun to be vaguely heard of during the first years of the Napoleonic wars. The accumulation of a vast fund of gold coin, available against sudden contingencies, was one of Bonaparte's "imperial" ideas. But the practice was continued more eagerly, if anything, by the Bourbon king at the time of the First Restoration, in 1814-15—a time when, if still quite as illicit from a legal point of view, the pursuit lost at least all savor of disloyalty.

This is the time of "The Belts of Gold."

It was at this period also that the value of the English guinea rose to its highest for exchange. Gold was in such demand in France that as much as thirty-two francs, in foreign silver or paper, could be obtained for a sovereign on the other side of the water—a return of over thirty per cent in a few days—if a safe agent could be secured; the profit being generously shared with the "captain" and his crew.

Gold therefore flowed at an alarming rate out of England to France; and it was made a criminal offense to export it, in any shape or form, from the kingdom. The prohibition was stringently, indeed ruthlessly, enforced. "In this manner," as Mr. Egerton Castle writes, in the introduction to his novel, "The Light of Scarthey," "this new and incredibly profitable traffic in English guineas entered the province of the 'free-trader'; the difference introduced in his practice being merely one of degree. Whereas, in the case of prohibited imports, the chief task lay in running home the illicit goods and distributing them, in the case of guinea

smuggling, its arduousness lay chiefly in the difficulty and danger of secretly collecting the gold inland and of clearing from home waters."

The transit to the French coast was generally made from such places as Hastings, Hythe, or Folkestone, on a moonless, tolerably calm night, in a swift ten-oared galley, which could also hoist a wide lugsail—of unobtrusive tan—when the wind sat in the right quarter. Under favorable circumstances, the passage could be effected in a few hours.

In a venture of this kind, not only hazardous, but unlawful, no receipt was, of course, of any value, since that contract could not be legally enforced. The shipper and broker, therefore—generally adverted to, it seems, by the few who were cognizant of the secret trade, under the noncommittal name of "Captain Smith"—had to be a man whose simple word was warranty. And, indeed, in the case of the larger consignments—a "run" often dealt with a load of thirty thousand guineas or more, four hundredweights or so of gold, packed in leather "belts"—this blind trust had to be extended to every man of his crew.

Such men were rare; and the "Captain Smiths" of those days stood forth as fine, romantic figures.

In the complete novel for April, Elizabeth Burgess Hughes has given us a fascinating young heroine not unlike the girl to whom Miriam Michelson introduced Ainslee's readers several years ago, when she wrote "In the Bishop's Carriage." Mrs. Hughes' story, "From the Iron Gates," is not only entertaining from beginning to end, but contains several scenes of unusual dramatic power.

The short stories in the same issue are unusually well varied, even for AINSLEE'S.

P. G. Wodehouse, author of "The Intru-

sions of Jimmy," is at his breeziest in "The Romance of an Ugly Policeman." Frank MacDonald's chronicle of "The Rebellion of Maurice Maeterlinck Hyatt" is a joy forever; while Katharine Baker adds to the sprightliness of the number with an amusing romance of an advertising agent who successfully injected business methods into his courtship.

But the April AINSLEE's is by no means all sunshine and humor. "The Woman Without a Fate" has all the intensity and poetic strength of Constance Skinner's best work, while "Bill Heenan's Cure" is another of William Slavens McNutt's smashing tales of the Northwest.

In "The Personal Touch," Bonnie R. Ginger displays all the delightfully keen characterization that you have learned to look for in her work. And there will be an Eleanor Ferris story, too—one of her best.

The "Super-woman" to whom Albert Payson Terhune will introduce us in April is Lady Hamilton, conqueror of the great Lord Nelson, whom mere nations could never conquer. "She was the patron saint(?) of all dime-novel heroines," Mr. Terhune tells us, "because at a period when such things were undreamed of, even in fiction, she rose from 'Nursemaid to Title.'"

It's a good number, this coming one; every bit as entertaining, if not more so, than the one you now have in hand.

N fiction it is especially true that "action speaks louder than words." A story must have vitality in order to be a good story. If, in addition, it is gracefully written, so much the better, of course. But if it is merely gracefully written, and is lacking in both life and action, the author might better have left his words in the dictionary where he found them. Literary style may be likened to a beautiful gown, which is intended to enhance the beauty and charm of some living, breathing woman. Literary grace in a story without vitality is like a gown on a wax figure. The living woman, even though not so well dressed, is an infinitely more interesting companion than the wax counter-

In a general way, as good a test as there is for action and vitality in fiction is how far it lends itself to dramatization. Pretty words alone can never make a play. It is for this reason that we find particular cause for gratification in the number of AINSLEE stories that have been drawn upon by the theater. "The Chorus Lady," by James Forbes; "The Intrusions of Jimmy," by P. G. Wodehouse; and "In the Bishop's Carriage," by Miriam Michelson, are instances readily recalled. The latest case is "Secret Strings," Kate Jordan's dramatization of her novel in AINSLEE'S, which Lou-Tellegen has chosen for his American engagement at the Longacre Theater in New York.





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### Any Stories by Good Authors

AINSLEE'S readers need not be told that the following short stories are in our April issue because of themselves—not because of their authors' names:

The Romance of an Ugly Policeman, P. G. Wodehouse The Personal Touch Bonnie R. Ginger The Rebellion of Maurice Maeterlinck Hyatt

Frank MacDonald

A Woman Therefore . . . Eleanor Ferris
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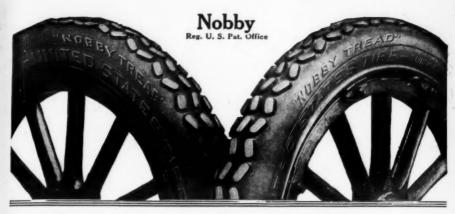
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